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Foreign counselling trainees' experiences of practising in a second language and culture

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Preface

I hereby declare that this thesis:

(a) has been composed by myself
(b) contains my own original work
(c) has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification

Lorena Georgiadou

Some of the work in this thesis has been published/submitted for publication as the following:

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Abstract

We live in a multicultural, globalised world, in which counsellors and psychotherapists are increasingly required to work across languages and cultures. Existing literature, however, focuses largely on the needs and experiences of foreign clients, often overlooking the other half of the therapeutic dyad. This thesis tackles the under-researched area of foreign practitioners who work in a host environment. Given the ongoing cultural enrichment of counsellor education in Britain and the demanding character of counselling training in general, this work focuses on one sub-group of this population, namely counsellors in training. To that end, this thesis explores foreign counselling trainees' experiences of practising in a second language and culture.

Underpinned by hermeneutic phenomenology, methodologically this project draws upon the principles of Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The investigation consists of two empirical studies based on semi-structured interviews with A) non-native speaking and B) native speaking, foreign trainees in their counselling placement. This research design aims to investigate the phenomenon of beginning intercultural counselling from a holistic perspective rather than compare the two groups' experiences.

Overall, findings reveal the numerous ways in which linguistic and cultural difference influence trainees' experiences of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. The experience of difference appears to mainly impact on trainees' practitioner identity rather than their perception of practice. Despite the complexities participants encounter, their accounts expose self-efficacy, revealing a position of viewing 'deficit' as advantageous. Moreover, findings indicate that the more 'tangible' difference is, the more readily trainees acknowledge and discuss its presence in counselling practice. This is largely related to intersubjectivity and encounters with others during training and practice. At the same time, participants' accounts demonstrate that 'nativeness/non-nativeness' is not purely a matter of linguistic mastery, but largely intertwined with familiarity with the host culture. To that end, this thesis proposes that counsellor education ought to address difference,

and non-nativeness in particular, from a broader perspective, advance the support provided to foreign trainees and provide opportunities for discussion that will promote all trainees' cultural awareness.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The profession of counselling and psychotherapy[1] is generally thought to function 'as a mirror of society', as it highlights aspects of social life that are central at various periods of time (McLeod, 2009, p. 35). Undoubtedly, 'the world of today is profoundly multicultural, multiethnic and multinational' (Christodoulidi & Lago, 2010, p. 231); as a consequence, therapeutic encounters increasingly take place across languages and cultures. Given the demanding nature of cross-cultural mobility, globalisation and voluntary or involuntary migration, people often seek therapeutic help in the new environments they move to. To better support this population, counselling and psychotherapy as a profession initially turned its attention to foreign clients' needs and experiences in the host culture, as well as the impact of their 'foreignness' on the therapeutic setting. This led to the development of a new 'area' (or illuminated a new perspective) of the counselling profession, often referred to as multicultural, cross-cultural, transcultural or intercultural counselling[2]; the focus of this field remains largely on domestic therapists counselling culturally diverse clients (Moodley, 2007).

Although a focus on foreign clients' needs is undoubtedly fundamental for the provision of services, psychotherapy involves (at least) two individuals: the client

[1] The terms 'counselling' and 'psychotherapy' are used interchangeably and from an inclusive perspective; they refer to a range of 'talking therapies' (Bondi, 2003b; Feltham, 2012) including different fields (e.g. psychoanalysis, counselling psychology) and diverse modalities/orientations (e.g. marital and family therapy, humanistic traditions). This choice reflects both a position of viewing differences among these fields as 'minimal and the commonalities as vast' (Feltham & Horton, 2006, p. xxxvi) and a pragmatic choice to advance my work. As some of the areas of literature informing this thesis are particularly limited, I adopt a broad, all-encompassing perspective of these interrelated fields to gain the most out of existing material.

[2] In this thesis, the term 'intercultural counselling' is preferred to emphasise the interactional nature of counselling. This argument is further developed in chapter 2.

and the therapist. In today's globalised world, the therapeutic dyad may entail foreign therapists who may be unfamiliar with the cultural and linguistic environment in which they are required to practise. Just as any migrant, practitioners are likely to be affected by the impact that 'foreignness' (being a foreigner in a host environment) and 'non-nativeness' (being a non-native speaker in a host country) can have on one's identity and life in general. Though not central to all professions, this impact can be critical for therapeutic practice, as the therapist's well-being, as well as her self- (and cultural-) awareness are inextricably linked to competence, fitness to practise and the provision of good quality therapy (Barden, 2005; Connor, 1994; McLeod, 2009). This highlights the pertinence of attending to foreign therapists' experiences of practising in countries and languages other than their native ones.

While foreignness and non-nativeness can affect any practitioner who is required to practise in a foreign environment, less experienced counsellors such as counsellors in training may be particularly exposed to this impact. Counsellor education is a demanding process (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Truell, 2001) that entails a considerable amount of personal growth work (Wosket, 2010). During this phase, student-counsellors work on aspects of self-development (Connor, 1994) and work to construct their practitioner-self (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). During training, counsellors also begin clinical practice, start working with real clients, a task that can produce a great deal of anxiety (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Adding the component of cultural and linguistic difference to this strenuous phase is likely to have an impact on trainees and their practice, complicating an already demanding process. There is little known, however, about the nature of this impact.

The vulnerability of their situation makes foreign counselling trainees a sub-group of foreign practitioners that requires particular attention within the wider field of intercultural counselling. In addition to the vulnerability of this group, the need to attend to this population is also reinforced by the increase in numbers of international trainees in American and British counselling training programmes provided by higher education institutions (Hyland, Trahar, Anderson, & Dickens, 2008; Ng, 2012; Pattison & Robson, 2013), an increase which is sought by counsellor education providers through active recruitment of international students in order to meet

professional accreditation requirements in relation to diversity, inclusion and equality. Just as the profession follows societal changes and responds to the population's needs to improve provision of services, it also ought to attend and respond to the changing population of practitioners-in-training to enhance provision of counsellor education. Work in this direction is anticipated to not only enhance training experience, but also advance trainees' practice, benefiting ultimately the wider community (Grafanaki, 2010a).

It becomes clear that better knowledge of foreign counselling trainees' experiences of training and intercultural practice can benefit the profession; nonetheless, scholarly work on this topic is considerably limited. This thesis wishes to contribute to this under-researched area by illuminating the phenomenon of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice.

1.2 Background and Motivation

My motivation to investigate this topic derives from my own personal experiences. As I will explain further in chapters three and four, reflexivity, self- and cultural-awareness as well as transparency of thoughts, decisions and actions are essential components of this work. These discussions are integrated into all chapters of this thesis. In this introductory chapter I include a section that offers some insight into my background. This aims to not only illuminate how I came to this research idea, but also to exhibit my understanding of and bias in the phenomenon I wish to investigate, justifying the specific focus of this study.

My interest in intercultural communication is well embedded in my childhood. From a very early age I had the opportunity to interact with individuals from different backgrounds and become conscious of the existence of realities and contexts other than my own. Encountering cultural diversity from an early age has possibly put the foundation for my general interest in languages and my positive predisposition towards difference more generally. These positions were, however, substantiated in my early adulthood. After the completion of my undergraduate studies in psychology in Greece, I moved to Italy with very basic knowledge of the language;

communication challenges became an intrinsic element of my personal and professional life there. Accordingly, I became aware of the necessity to take a step back and question things that I might have assumed in my own, familiar, linguistic and cultural context. During my stay there I also came across people's different reactions to my foreignness and non-nativeness. For the first time I experienced admiration for my ability to function in a foreign language but also impatience related to my linguistic imperfection. I realised that some people perceived intercultural encounters as something positive and natural, while others resisted them. All these experiences fascinated and intrigued me. Once I mastered the language of the host country at a level that allowed me to express myself satisfactorily, I joined a personal development group. Exploring and expressing my and others' emotional worlds in a foreign language proved demanding. I realised that things that may be taken for granted within one's own culture, may need exploration and explanation beyond it. I also experienced a feeling of being understood and understanding others in spite of linguistic barriers and momentary misunderstandings. All these experiences were gradually nurturing my interest in the impact of foreign language and culture on the therapeutic environment.

The following year I moved to Scotland and undertook a Masters in Counselling Studies. The multicultural character of the academic institution gave me the opportunity to interact with people from a number of cultures and enrich my competence in intercultural communication and understanding. Academic work in a second language proved challenging but interesting. Given the centrality of self-development and personal growth work inherent in counselling training, I found myself in a position of writing about personal experiences in a language other than my mother tongue. While initially this work was based on translating from Greek to English, I eventually started 'working with my self' in English. Keeping a personal learning diary in a second language came as a revelation, as I found the space (and perhaps the distance I needed) to address past experiences and contemplate new realisations in a safer language. While second language use facilitated the process of engaging with these reflections, at the same time it inhibited my accuracy. I often found myself limited by the English vocabulary and used words in Greek, either

because I did not know the appropriate English term or because it did not resonate with me in the same way as the Greek one did. These barriers were particularly related to areas of emotional expression.

In addition to these experiences, negotiation and expression of emotions in a second language were present also in domains of the course. Though not involving counselling work with real clients, my studies required students to practise counselling skills with peers as a preparatory step for future engagement with clinical practice. I therefore had the opportunity to be in the position of the 'talker' and the 'listener' in a second language and culture, a process that often involved detailed exploration of emotions. These one-to-one interactions revealed several interesting features: through this work I became aware of the tremendous impact of second-language use in a therapeutic setting, an impact that I had not realised in its totality as a member of the personal development group in Italy, or in other domains of academia (course work, class participation) and social life abroad. In the position of the 'talker', I often experienced linguistic and cultural barriers that were (in most cases) quickly resolved through my interlocutor's attentive listening and empathic attitude. In the position of the 'listener' however, these barriers were experienced as bigger, as they were intertwined with my lack of confidence in terms of counselling practice. I often felt frustrated and embarrassed by my inability to understand my peers; my attention was frequently interrupted by my inarticulacy and I experienced various power asymmetries in relation to non-nativeness and foreignness.

When faced with the decision to continue my studies abroad and undertake a diploma-level course, which would involve clinical practice with real clients, admittedly, I was hesitant and anxious. Would I be able to practise effectively in a second language and culture? Would clients trust me? Discussions with other foreign, non-native speaking peers reinforced my tentativeness, as most shared my apprehension. Through these discussions I realised that anxiety regarding linguistic and cultural competence in intercultural practice was not uncommon among foreign student counsellors and in some cases (like mine) it prevented individuals from engaging in further training.

In an attempt to understand and relate to what it is like to be a foreign counselling trainee working with clients in a second language and culture, and therefore inform my decision to continue with further training, I turned to existing literature. The dearth of scholarly work in this area left me with little insight of this phenomenon. This dissatisfaction, alongside the evident gap in the relevant literature, gradually transformed personal curiosity into a broader research idea on the phenomenon of beginning counselling practice across languages and cultures. This general theme became the foundation of this investigation, which was shaped into more concrete research questions through critical engagement with existing literature (detailed in chapter two).

1.3 Structure of Thesis

Following my personal interest and the dearth in the existing literature, I identified relevant bodies of literature that informed my broad research ideas. Through the evaluation of this scholarly area, I identified a gap and narrowed down the focus of this thesis. This work is presented in chapter two, beginning with an introductory clarification of related terms and concepts.

In chapter three I present the theoretical underpinnings of this investigation and explain how the work of specific philosophers and social theorists have shaped my understanding of reality (ontology) and of acquiring knowledge about phenomena (epistemology). Following this, I detail the methodological approach I followed in this study and its relevance to my ontological and epistemological positions, as well as to the aim of this study.

Chapter four offers a detailed account of this thesis' research methods. I begin the chapter with an explication of the use of reflexivity in this work; I then describe the evolution of this project's research design and justify its final structure of including two studies: A) of non-native speaking trainees, and B) of native English speaking foreign trainees' experiences of intercultural/interlinguistic practice. I also present the method of data generation and analysis and conclude the chapter with a discussion of the ethical considerations related to this project.

Chapters five and six present findings from study A (non-native speakers) and study B (native speakers) respectively. Findings are considered in an idiographic manner, accompanied by visual graphics and my interpretative commentary. To allow my participants' voices to be central, I refrain from including existing literature and theory in this section. The integration of my findings with existing scholarly material takes place at the end of each chapter, where I discuss each individual super-ordinate theme separately and provide a final summarising section of the overall study.

Finally, in chapter seven I synthesise findings from study A and B and provide general conclusions about the experience of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. Non-native and native speaking foreign trainees' experiences are seen as complementary and not as contradictory; hence, this chapter does not compare and contrast the two groups but uses the two perspectives to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation. Conclusions are discussed and followed by a consideration of the thesis' research questions in relation to its findings, demonstrating this work's coherence. Implications for training, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also discussed here.

1.4 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I introduced the broad field in which this thesis is located and identified the theme's pertinence to that context. I offered information on my background and motivation to conduct this study and concluded the chapter by explicating the structure of this thesis. In the following chapter I review the relevant bodies of literature that inform this investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present this thesis' literature review section, where I identify and critically appraise the bodies of literature that inform and refine the subject of this investigation. Prior to this, I clarify key terms that I borrow from other disciplines and which are central to this work. Following the rationale provided in chapter one, this thesis is located within the broad field of counselling and psychotherapy and, in particular, the sphere of 'intercultural counselling'. Chapter one also explicated that the interests of this study lie in the under-researched area of novice practitioner experience of intercultural/interlinguistic practice, rather than in the experiences of culturally diverse clients, which is where existing literature focuses. This locates my study further, placing it within the domain of counsellor education and, in fact, within 'multicultural[3] counselling training', a field that encourages and attends to cultural diversity in counsellor education. This is the main body of literature from which this thesis draws and to which it contributes, by advancing it with new perspectives and useful implications for training in a multicultural environment. In this chapter, the section that tackles these issues is entitled **(intercultural) counselling and (multicultural) counselling training**.

Even though client experiences are not explored here, this study is not disconnected from practice. As explained, enhancement of counsellor education is directly linked to the improvement of service provision; therefore this thesis ultimately contributes to the profession of counselling and psychotherapy in a globalised world.

In addition to the contextualisation of this study within a certain area of specialisation, the introductory chapter highlighted the particular aspect of diversity

[3] The term 'multicultural' is used to denote plurality of cultures. Clarification of the interrelated terms takes place in section 2.3.5 of this chapter.

that this study explores, namely, linguistic and cultural difference[4]. In its majority, the existing literature views cultural difference either from an all-encompassing perspective of 'international' status, or through the narrow prism of 'visibility' of ethnicity. It hence falls short of exploring language as a feature of difference, despite its pertinence to counselling practice. This thesis' interest in linguistic and cultural difference demonstrates its originality and substantiates its exploratory nature. To overcome this gap in the literature and inform my study, I explore scholarly material that exceeds its principal area of specialty (counsellor education), linking this investigation to the sphere of the phenomenon of bilingualism in therapeutic encounters. **Bilingualism and psychotherapy** is the second area of literature that complements this study. This field also focuses mainly on bilingual clients, placing significantly less attention to the other half of the therapeutic dyad; the bilingual therapist. In this case, client-related literature is included in this review, as it gives useful insight into the general phenomenon of bilingualism and second-language use in relation to identity and emotional processing.

Overall, the literature review for this thesis consists of two broad areas that are not connected explicitly: **(intercultural) counselling and (multicultural) counselling training**, and **bilingualism and psychotherapy**. The interrelatedness of these bodies of literature, the specific areas on which I focus as well as the gaps that I identify in this material may be better understood through a schematic representation:

[4] The relationship between these two concepts will be explained in more detail throughout this chapter.

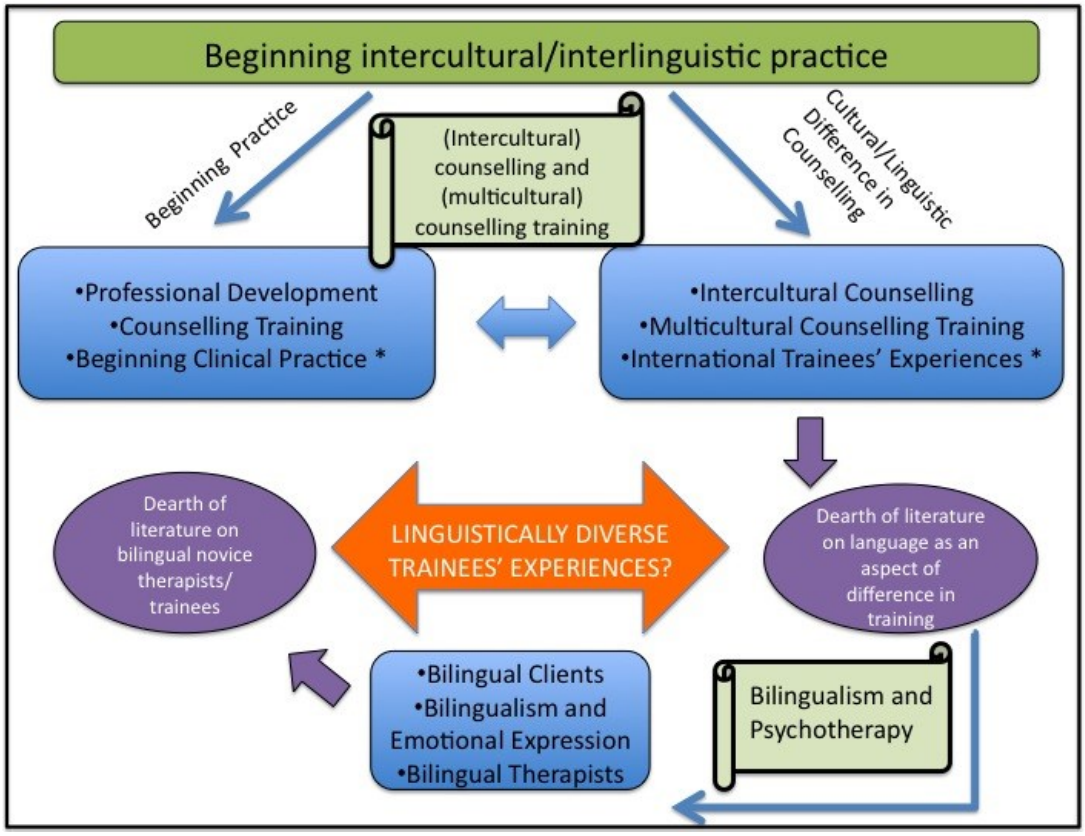

Figure 1: Structure of this thesis' literature review

At the top of the figure stands the broad phenomenon I wish to investigate, which entails two aspects, namely beginning clinical practice (left arrow) and cultural and linguistic difference in counselling training and practice (right arrow). Given that existing literature offers little insight into the interplay of these two domains, in my literature review I explore those individually, attempting to highlight connections. These two areas compose the first body of literature that informs this review, namely, **(intercultural) counselling and (multicultural) counselling training** (top horizontal scroll). To understand the phenomenon of beginning clinical practice (left blue box), I look at literature on counsellor professional development and then focus on counselling training in Britain. I then enter the field of beginning practice, a central aspect of this investigation. This introductory investigation sets the scene for the following area of literature, which is related more directly to the phenomenon I explore. I start this examination by addressing cultural and linguistic difference in counselling (right blue box), with an overview of the development of intercultural

counselling and then move on to the main body of literature that informs this study, multicultural counselling training. I then focus on international trainees' experiences of training and practising in a host country. This body of literature points to a gap in relation to language as an aspect of difference in training (right purple oval). This leaves one aspect of the overall phenomenon under investigation, namely, 'interlinguistic practice', uncovered. To bridge this gap, I enter the sphere of **bilingualism and psychotherapy** (bottom right horizontal scroll), which is the second main body of literature that composes my literature review. Within this field (bottom blue box), I explore the literature on bilingual clients (mainly associated with the topic of emotional expression in a second language) and continue with the limited research on bilingual therapists. This literature, however, does not provide insight into bilingual trainees and novice therapists (left purple oval), which, as highlighted by the literature on beginning clinical practice (*) and international counselling trainees (*) may find themselves in a particularly demanding situation during their training. From the two identified literature gaps emerges the main focus of my investigation, namely the subjective experiences of linguistically diverse counselling trainees (orange double arrow).

Prior to the exploration of these bodies of literature that refine this study's focus and lead to the formulation of its research questions, there is a need to clarify key terms that will ground the consequent chapters.

2.2 Setting the Ground: Clarifying Terms

2.2.1 Introduction

To this point, I referred to vague concepts such as language, culture, bilingualism, nativeness/non-nativeness and identity, which fall into the sphere of other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, linguistics and cultural studies. These terms require clarification as they are linked to a range of definitions, meanings and discourses in their respective fields. Nonetheless, pragmatically, this thesis' location within the field of counselling and psychotherapy and its focus on a specific phenomenon (beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice) does not allow a comprehensive

review of literature that lies beyond it, especially when this material involves such multifaceted concepts. In order to offer a rigorous critical appraisal of the literature that is directly linked to this study and which borrows these terms, I need to at least explain how I use them in this thesis. To that end, in this section I explore the main historical and theoretical positions of the above-mentioned concepts. As a starting point, I looked into literature within the discipline of counselling and psychotherapy, which I informed and enriched with theory and research from other disciplines.

2.2.2 Investigating Language

Understanding language through culture

Arragno and Schlachet have beautifully described language and culture as 'the prism that directs the coloration of all experience, a template for the meaning and form of how we know the world and perceive everything in it' (1996, p. 23). I take a similar position of viewing linguistic and cultural background as central to making sense of one's own and others' experiences. This will be further explained in chapter three. Here, I outline my perspective of language, which justifies further this thesis' interest in linguistic and cultural difference.

Philosophical debates roughly mirror two positions in relation to language and its role in conveying meaning. The first more traditional standpoint views language as accurately representing an externally existing reality; the second, as a 'tool (...) that helps humans cope with their environment' (Hansen, 2008, p. 254). This second perspective is influenced by a Wittgensteinian understanding of language as *performative*, according to which meaning is not directly given by the literal use of language but requires understanding of the wider context in which language is used:

> This is how these words are used. It would be quite misleading (...) to call the words a "description of a mental state". - One might rather call them a "signal"; and we judge whether it was rightly employed by what he goes on to do.
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1958, pp. 73, para. 180)

I agree with this latter position that views language as a tool to convey meaning or experience that is not however 'correct' or 'accurate', nor does it reflect an

independently existing reality; and that identifies context (and culture) as playing an important role in any communicative attempt, including an interlinguistic one. Indeed, I perceive language to be 'social' (Dewaele, 2007), 'culturally soaked' (Burck, 2004) and 'embedded in our cultural history' (Uphoff, 2011). As a consequence, exploring second language use in therapeutic practice while ignoring the interrelated socio-cultural context would be at least meaningless, if not impossible. Similarly, as language is not understood separately from culture, I understand 'second' language use from a wider perspective that includes socio-cultural elements as well as linguistic ones. This will be better understood through an explication of my understanding of the concepts of bilingualism and nativeness/non-nativeness.

Bilingualism: A flexible perspective

'Bilingual' is a term used widely but obscurely by different scholars and disciplines (Dewaele, 2007). Undeniably it has greatly evolved over the years. At its formation, bilingualism referred to a 'native-like control of two languages' that was the result of 'perfect foreign language learning' (Bloomfield, 1935, pp. 55-56). Nowadays scholars have realised the arbitrary but also inestimable nature of such characterisations (Dewaele, 2007) and endorsed broader definitions that reflect the complexity of the phenomenon. For example, Edwards (1994, p. 3) describes bilingualism as 'the ability to speak at some level more than one language' and MacKay (2000, p. 22) as the 'alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual'. Dewaele and colleagues' definition of bilingualism illuminates also:

> various 'imperfect' and 'unstable' forms of bilingualism, in which one language takes over from the other(s) on at least some occasions and for some instances of language use
>
> (Dewaele, Housen, & Wei, 2003, p. 1)

These inclusive definitions often require further clarifications that apply to specific situations and speakers. For example, Wei (2000) provides a comprehensive list of different types of bilinguals based on age of acquisition, level of proficiency etc. Similarly MacKay (2000) identifies elements that characterise the bilingual speaker, such as level of mastery or alternation of the respective languages. Dewaele (2007),

problematising the feasibility of 'perfect' bilinguals draws from Cook (2003), who suggests viewing bilingualism as a continuum with basic use of a second language on one end and 'undistinguishable from native' use on the other. My position towards the phenomenon of bilingualism[5] aligns with the above-mentioned loose definitions of individuals who use, speak and understand to some extent, more than one language. For example, theoretically, I consider as bilinguals both myself, who started learning English at primary school, and the individual who was born to a British father and French mother and grew up speaking both languages at a 'native-like' level.

Native/Non-native speaker: Problematising the terms

Two interrelated terms that are pertinent to this thesis' research design and literature are 'native' and 'non-native' speaker. The 'native/non-native speaker' dichotomy has been criticised widely since the early 1990s from scholars in different fields such as linguistics (e.g. Davies, 2003) and education (Braine, 1999; Llurda, 2005; Rampton, 1990), for falling short of mirroring adequately the complexity of individuals' linguistic identities (Faez, 2011; Park, 2007). Despite the cross-discipline criticism and scholars' endeavours to establish new terminology (Rampton, 1990) or discard the dichotomy view in favour of a continuum-model (Liu, 1999), the terms native and non-native speaker continue to prevail in the relevant literature (Faez, 2011; Park, 2007).

While I recognise the arbitrariness of this dichotomy and acknowledge the failure of these terms to represent accurately the diverse linguistic identities of individuals in modern society, in this thesis I adopt this terminology to differentiate between people who are born and raised within a language and whose (self-perception of) language use is at a native-like level, and those who acquire a language at a later age, do not consider themselves native speakers and would not be perceived by others as such. This classification is in line with Davies' (2003) understanding of native/non-native

[5] While some scholars differentiate between bi- and multi-lingualism (e.g. Edwards, 1994), in this thesis the term bilingual is endorsed as an umbrella term that refers to any number of languages acquired by an individual.

identities as sociolinguistic constructs depending on proficiency, self-affiliation and approval by others rather than being dictated by grammatical norms. I deliberately encompass a fluid and debatable definition for the terms native/non-native speaker that emphasises intersubjective understandings of language use and linguistic identities rather than conforming to external classifications. So in this English-based thesis, the term 'native speaker' refers to individuals who were born and raised in an English-speaking environment, are proficient in English and consider themselves as speaking English at a native-like level. Similarly, the term 'non-native' refers to individuals who were born and raised in a non-English speaking environment, learned English at a later age and do not consider themselves as speaking English at a native-like level. It will become obvious that these two terms are pertinent in my research design as they describe the two sub-groups of participants informing this study. By using the terms 'native/non-native' I do not standardise all native speakers as sharing or using the same language in the same way; neither do I reject the possibility of non-native speakers acquiring a second language at a native-like level later in life. It is however perceived as a pragmatic terminology to define an individual's use of a language within a specific context.

An interrelated clarification is required here. To denote the experience of being a native/non-native speaker of a certain language from a strictly linguistic point of view (vocabulary use, knowledge of grammar structures), I adopt the terms nativeness and non-nativeness respectively. So in this thesis nativeness/non-nativeness refer exclusively to language use and not to a more broad understanding of a person's belonging to or connection with a certain country. Correspondingly, I use the term 'foreignness' to refer to a person's quality of 'not being from here' (Kissil, Davey, & Davey, 2012) and to describe a feeling of 'being foreign' in a certain context.

2.2.3 Culture and Ethnicity

Culture and ethnicity are two interrelated terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature across disciplines (Ibrahim, 2011; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993). Although this thesis does not focus on ethnicity, the confusion around the term and

its frequent interchangeable use with the term culture calls for some attention. Given this study's interest in intercultural counselling practice, I have mainly examined the relevant literature in the field of intercultural communication and intercultural counselling, both of which are informed by theories in sociology, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics and psychology. This section first outlines some of the historical usages of the terms culture and ethnicity, and then explicates their specific use in this thesis.

Scholars point out that in spite of its profound influence on individuals, culture is a concept that is particularly difficult to define (Eleftheriadou, 2010; Lago, 2006). Lago (2006) maintains that since the early 1960s there have been more than a hundred and sixty relevant definitions in the social sciences literature, revealing different theoretical perspectives. Similarly, the literature on ethnicity is full of vagueness and complexity analogous to that of the term culture. It is notable that in an attempt to clarify the term, Isajiw (1974) reviewed sixty-five studies investigating the concept and found that fifty-two of them did not provide an explicit definition; they understood ethnicity broadly as a sense of group identity that derives from real or subjective common bonds (e.g. language, race, religion).

Overall, definitions and theories of culture and ethnicity can be broadly classified in two opposing positions, a primordialist and an instrumentalist one (Busch, 2009; Ibrahim, 2011; Wiseman, 2002). With regards to culture, primordialists view it in terms of attributed demographic characteristics (such as nationality) that 'are passed down from generation to generation' (Tyler, 1871, cited in Bolaffi, 2003, p. 61), associating culture with a 'given state'. Similarly, primordialists view ethnicity as an externally attributed state that is fairly established: 'One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto (...) by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself' (Geertz, 1963, p. 107). This position has been criticised as inflexible and therefore as failing to explain the subjective character of these concepts (Ibrahim, 2011), to portray the complexity of cultural and ethnic identities in the contemporary context of globalization, cross-country mobility and intercultural families (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2011), and ignoring specific cultural and historical contexts (Jones, 1997). Instrumentalists on the other hand view

culture as constructed by the people who belong to it (Busch, 2009). Within this more contemporary tradition, different strands take on diverse positions following their specific areas of interests and concerns. For example, psychologist Harry Triandis and his colleagues (Triandis, 2000; Triandis, Bontempo, Leung, & Hui, 1990) define culture as a shared meaning system; a set of values, beliefs and attitudes shared by a group that shares a language and geographic area. Similarly, Carter (1995) views culture as all the knowledge, skills, attitudes and language transmitted from one generation to another. These perspectives are clearly differentiated from the primordialist position, acknowledging the role of the individual members in the formation of their culture. Nonetheless, they are still rather vague and fall short of differentiating between the cultural and the personal influences in shaping a culture (Pedersen, 1991). Indeed, these definitions seem rather obscure, recognising culture as something that somehow exists and to which individuals somehow belong, without explaining any of these processes further. A different perspective was introduced by scholars who emphasised individuals' preferences, as well as inter- and intra-group interactions. This position seems particularly relevant to the investigation of intercultural counselling practice during training, a phenomenon that involves diverse face-to-face interactions and negotiations of identity.

Proponents in the field of intercultural communication Collier and Thomas describe culture as a fluid system of meanings and norms that are historically transmitted (Collier & Thomas, 1988) but where 'the emphasis is upon identities, intersubjectively defined by similarities in symbols and norms' (Collier, 1989, p. 295). Culture is therefore not understood as a set of values and attitudes, but as a dynamic, flexible construct that is informed though intra and inter-cultural negotiations, without however denying some form of continuity (historical transmission). I find this inclusive position particularly useful, as it explains both the relative permanence and the fluidity of cultural characteristics, by placing individuals at the core of this negotiation. Following this, when I use the term 'culture' in this thesis I refer to a dynamic entity that entails values, beliefs and attitudes transmitted through generations but at the same time potentially altered by each member of a cultural group, as these are understood by individuals. So when I ask a participant

about her experience of practising in a different 'culture', I use the term loosely to refer to a host environment that entails its own values, beliefs, attitudes and norms, as these are understood as different by the participant herself.

With regard to ethnicity, instrumentalists understand the concept as subjective, socially constructed and a matter of rational choice (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996). This position is rooted in Max Weber's understanding of ethnic groups as depending on 'a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration' (Weber, 1968, p. 389). This perspective is diametrical to the primordialist one, illuminating individuals' agency rather than recognising externally attributed states. Having said that, this emphasis on the individuals' rational choice has been a point of criticism for ignoring the various socio-cultural influences on understanding ethnicity (Ibrahim, 2011; Jones, 1997), mirroring the debate presented earlier between the two instrumentalist strands in relation to culture. Some scholars attempted to address this criticism by suggesting that while ethnicity is flexible, it also involves 'social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership' (Barth, 1969, p. 10). This led to a differentiation of ethnicity as *internally* and *externally defined* with the first focusing on individuals' ethnic self-identification and the latter on more generally attributed ethnicities to people and groups (Ibrahim, 2011).

This differentiation facilitates my understanding of the term and clarifies its use in this thesis. Following my interest in trainees' subjective experiences of intercultural practice, which involves an acknowledgement of intersubjectivity over 'objective' or 'external' states, in this thesis the term ethnicity is understood as what Barth (1969) described as 'internally defined' ethnicity. Thus, the term is used to refer to individuals' self-perceived states of belonging to specific groups based on self and other negotiations (e.g. 'us' and 'them'), without, however, rejecting the significance of external (societal) impact in the process of shaping these states.

To conclude, although culture is often found as a synonym for ethnicity in the literature (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993), in this thesis culture refers to a wider

construct that influences and is influenced by its members, and ethnicity to an intersubjectively negotiated *state of belonging* to a group. This follows Dhillon-Stevens' differentiation between culture and ethnicity:

> Ethnicity refers to individuals' identification with a group sharing some of the following traits: customs, lifestyles, religion, language or nationality. Culture is a sociological and anthropological concept, an identity which everyone has, based on a number of factors such as memories, ethnic identity, family attitudes to child rearing, class, money, religious or other celebrations, and the division of family roles according to gender or age
>
> (Dhillon-Stevens, 2012, p. 57)

It is important to note that both my participants and I used the term 'ethnicity' very rarely in the interviews. When the term was used, it often referred to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds and identities, both by people who belonged to these groups and white individuals. In retrospect, this may denote an established colonialist tendency to dissociate ethnicity from 'whiteness' (Ibrahim, 2011) and use it as a 'euphemism for race' (Dhillon-Stevens, 2012, p. 57). As race is a political term (Ibrahim, 2011) associated with discourses around oppression (Dhillon-Stevens, 2012) that exceed this thesis' interest, I use self-defined terms such as 'visible ethnic difference' or 'visibility of ethnicity' to refer to issues of skin colour and other observable ethnic differentiators.

2.2.4 Conceptualising Identity: A Socio-Cultural Linguistic framework

To conclude this section of clarifying terms, this thesis' interest in subjective experience of intercultural/interlinguistic practice indubitably touches upon issues of identity(ies). It is therefore important to explicate the theoretical framework in which I locate my use of the term. Theorising identity is a complex endeavour that has drawn the interest of many scholars in several fields, such as linguistics (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981), psychology (e.g. Erikson, 1968) and sociology (Giddens, 1991). Similarly, multiple volumes have been produced in an attempt to present the diverse theories and research on the topic (e.g. De Gay, Evans, & Redman, 2000; Leary, 1995; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). This thesis does not aspire to engage in this debate, as it would not advance the phenomenon under investigation.

Nonetheless, as the term comes up throughout this work, it is important to explain how it is used.

This thesis employs a broad 'socio-cultural' orientation in viewing identity, which understands it as a fluid, dialogic, multifaceted and context-dependent concept (Block, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Norton, 2006; Weedon, 1997). This perspective is in line with my overall use of terminology on language and culture described earlier. It also follows the general tendency in contemporary theory and research in the social sciences, which has moved away from:

> a preoccupation with stability, function and structure, to a priming of individual agency, and a shift from fixed *essentialized* versions of demographic categories such as race, ethnicity, gender and age to a generally constructivist perspective which sees these categories as more fluid and unstable
>
> (Block, 2007, p. 3)

Following this, I do not conceptualise different demographic categories as constituting separate identities (e.g. cultural identity, professional identity, linguistic identity) but as informing a versatile and dynamic whole that shifts based on subjectivity and intersubjective encounters. I agree with the position that different aspects of identity become more salient than others depending on the situation. As the author Aamin Maalouf put it:

> there have been people who considered that an individual had one overriding affiliation so much more important in every circumstance to all others that it might legitimately be called his or her "identity". For some it was the nation, for others religion or class. But one has only to look at various conflicts being fought out all over the world today to realize that no one allegiance has absolute supremacy. Where people feel their faith is threatened, it is their religious affiliation that seems to reflect their whole identity. But if their mother tongue or ethnic group is in danger, then they will fight ferociously against their co-religionists.
>
> (Maalouf, 2000, cited in Ibrahim, 2011, p. 14)

Therefore, in this investigation of individuals' experiences of *practising* in a second *language* and *culture,* I may refer to at least three interwoven identity affiliations, namely profession, language and culture (with visibility of ethnicity being a potential fourth), which are anticipated to inform participants' experience of practice. As

suggested, while the emphasis of this research is on language, this is not understood as separate from the individual's wider societal and cultural context. As a consequence, this thesis calls for a model that places language at the core of identity, attending at the same time to the influence of culture (specific groups), ethnicity (self-perception of belonging) and society (wider discourses such as professional standards, stereotypes etc).

A framework that aligns with this need was introduced by the linguist Mary Bucholtz and her colleague Kira Hall (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Bucholtz and Hall drew upon theories from different fields (e.g. psychology, sociolinguistics, anthropology), brought them together and constructed an interdisciplinary framework in relation to understanding identity. Their aim was to 'acknowledge the full range of work that falls under the rubric of language and identity' and 'help researchers recognize the comprehensive toolkit already available for them for analyzing identity as a centrally linguistic phenomenon' (2005, p. 586). Bucholtz's and Hall's framework of 'sociocultural linguistic identity' views identity as *'the social positioning of self and other'* (2005, p. 586), setting forth five principles: identities are products of language and therefore social and cultural rather than predominantly psychological entities; they entail 'macro-level demographic categories' (2005, p. 592) as well as idiographic cultural positions that are context-dependent and that may be linguistically indexed and dependent on specific structures and systems. They are intersubjectively constructed and, finally, are considered to be:

> in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes
>
> (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 606)

This inclusive, dynamic view of identity emphasises individuals' personal experiences and understandings, recognising simultaneously the enormous impact of social and cultural contexts. At the same time, it highlights the shifting nature and intersectionality of identity, which is particularly useful when researching interrelated identity affiliations as in this thesis.

2.2.5 Summary of Section

In this section of **clarification of terms** that precedes this thesis' literature review, I have discussed key debates and positions around the terms culture, ethnicity, bilingualism, nativeness/non-nativeness and identity and clarified their use in this thesis. As explicitly stated, this attempt is by no means a comprehensive review of the relevant bodies of literature, but a clarification of terms to allow their coherent and accurate use. In the following section I move on to a more in-depth, critical appraisal of the literature that informs this study in a more direct manner. The first body of literature that I review is **(intercultural) counselling and (multicultural) counselling training**.

2.3 (Intercultural) Counselling and (Multicultural) Counselling Training

2.3.1 Introduction

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the existing literature on the phenomenon of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice is very limited. To that end, this literature review starts from a wide perspective and gradually zooms in to the core of this investigation, that is, foreign counselling trainees' experiences of practising interculturally. I begin with an introductory discussion that locates the professional developmental phase that I am interested in (counsellors in training) and then move on to a more focused discussion on counsellor education in Britain, where this doctoral research takes place. From that, I zoom in further, to the particular aspect of training that is under scrutiny, namely clinical practice. As this body of literature does not offer insight into the perspectives of culturally diverse trainees, I zoom out again to enter the field of intercultural counselling, which addresses the topic of cultural difference in the therapeutic environment. Given my study's location within the training domain, I then review the scholarly area of multicultural counselling training, which concludes with a critical appraisal of the limited research on international counselling trainees' experiences of training and practice. The absence of literature on language as an aspect of difference in this whole field

justifies the second section of this literature review, **bilingualism and psychotherapy**.

2.3.2 Counsellor Professional Development

Becoming and being a counsellor is often conceptualised as a 'journey' that is rooted in the person's childhood and develops across the life span (Fouad, 2003; Gans, 2010; Grafanaki, 2010b; McLeod, 2009; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Scholars investigating the field of therapist development, identify different phases. These can be broadly understood as lay helpers, students and professionals (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2012). Skovholt and Rønnestad's work is salient in the area of counsellor and therapist development. In a large-scale qualitative study, Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992, 1995) interviewed one hundred American counsellors and therapists at diverse periods of their career and integrated their results with existing theories on counselling development. As a conclusion, they constructed an eight-stage model of counsellor development. A decade later, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) restructured their model, introducing a six-*phase* one: lay helper, beginning student, advanced student, novice professional, experienced professional and senior professional. While lay-helpers, students and professionals can be differentiated based on having received and completed formal training or not, the model is not explicit about the different levels of each developmental phase (e.g. beginning and advanced student). In addition, the model follows the American training standards and procedures, thereby limiting the transferability of these terms to other contexts, where training standards may be diverse. A few years later, an international large-scale study was conducted on the same topic. Orlinsky, Rønnestad and Ambühl (2005) analysed five thousand self-report questionnaires investigating the 'formative experiences, practices and development of psychotherapists at all career levels' (2005, p. 7) and identified six similar developmental phases, that were however based on a specific criterion, i.e., practitioners' years of clinical experience: novices (less than one and a half years), apprentices (one and a half to three and a half), graduates (three and a half to seven), established practitioners (seven to fifteen), seasoned (fifteen to twenty-five), and finally, senior therapists (more than twenty-five years). While the latter classification is less vague, it is also more prescriptive, as

it classifies therapists based on an external factor rather than subjectively experienced developmental processes.

It becomes obvious that the counsellor's journey can be understood in different ways. To my mind, professional development is not only a personal matter (and hence experienced differently by individuals) but also a dynamic process that changes significantly over time. Therefore trying to 'capture' and describe it in strict terms seems rather limiting. The focus of this study (beginning counselling practice) can be *loosely* located between Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) 'beginning' and 'advanced' student phases, and within Orlinsky, Rønnestad and Ambühl's 'novice' therapist phase. I use the terms 'novice' and 'beginning' to describe the period of the first year of counselling experience, without any intention to classify my participants' competence or evaluate their professional development.

Having contextualised this study with regards to the developmental phase of practitioners, I next provide a concise overview of counselling training in Britain, where this is project is located geographically.

2.3.3 Counsellor Training in Britain

Scholars agree that counselling training is a multifaceted, demanding and potentially overwhelming process (Folkes-Skinner, Elliott, & Wheeler, 2010; Orlinsky, Rønnestad, et al., 2005; Pica, 1998; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003) that often impacts negatively on trainees (Grafanaki, 2010a; Truell, 2001). Grafanaki (2010b) maintains that better knowledge of trainees' experiences and challenges does not only improve counsellor education, but also leads to better delivery of services. Unfortunately, the literature on counselling training has not attracted significant attention from researchers (Rønnestad & Ladany, 2006) and is predominantly American. This thesis attempts to contribute to this body of literature by offering insight into one aspect of the experience of counselling training from the perspective of one group of trainees in a specific British context.

In spite of its internal fluidity discussed earlier, formal counselling training leading to accreditation by professional bodies is a relatively well-defined process that is

distinct from lay-helpers (enrolment to programme) and professional practitioners (graduation, professional accreditation) and conforms to specific parameters. Its regulations can vary significantly across countries (McCarthy, 2011) and follow the profession's overall evolution. For example in Britain, counselling developed as a 'lay practice' (Bondi & Fewell, 2003); in its early days, it 'was not perceived a profession in its own right but as something people did, with little or no training, as part of another profession' (Dryden, Mearns, & Thorne, 2000, p. 471). Nowadays professional bodies in Britain monitor training standards and provide accreditation to the various dedicated programmes providing counsellor education (Pattison & Robson, 2013). These programmes are available in diverse settings such as voluntary-sector organisations, private businesses, and academic institutions; the latter becoming increasingly important (Bondi, 2003b; Bondi & Fewell, 2003). Following the tendency in the majority of published material, this thesis also focuses on training provided by higher education institutions.

In order for a training programme to gain accreditation from a professional body in Britain, it needs to fulfil certain requirements, i.e. operate from an ethical and inclusive framework, provide knowledge-based learning, advance therapeutic competencies and overall professional development, promote self-awareness and to entail practice-based training (placement) and supervision (BACP, 2009/2012; COSCA, 2012; UKCP, 2013). Counsellor educators also share a 'broad consensus concerning the elements that need to be included in training courses' (McLeod, 2009, p. 620): theoretical framework, development of counselling skills and self-awareness, supervised practice, ethical framework of practice and use of research to inform practice.

Among the different training components, beginning clinical practice is identified as 'the most important task' of training (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 12). Gans suggested that 'the making of the psychotherapist remains incomplete without clinical experience' (2010, p. 1). Beginning clinical practice has also been described as a 'baptism of fire' (Folkes-Skinner, et al., 2010), a 'powerful source of learning and development' (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 33) but also 'the major catalyst for novice stress' (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003, p. 45). De Stefano, D' Iuso, Blake et

al. agree with this, contending that 'nowhere is [trainees'] anxiety more prevalent, than in face-to-face counselling with actual clients' (2007, p. 42). Existing research, however, examines counselling training as an overall phenomenon, falling short of elucidating the experience of beginning counselling practice. For example, Skovholt and Rønnestad's (2003) work on counsellor development points out seven 'major novice stressors', without differentiating between the various training aspects (placement, supervision, academic requirements, class work). A closer look reveals that two of the stressors are associated with counsellor training as a general process (scrutiny by gatekeepers and enhanced need for emotional support and guidance by mentors), and the remaining five are directly linked to clinical practice (discussed later).

Better understanding of how students experience, perceive and make sense of their training can facilitate educators to better meet trainees' needs and therefore improve their overall experience of training and practice (Grafanaki, 2010b; Pattison, 2003). While I recognise that beginning clinical practice does not exist in a vacuum, its centrality to counselling training as well as its especially stressful nature, convinced me that focusing on this specific aspect of training and understanding its potential impact on trainees in depth may be particularly informative for counsellor education and consequently for the overall profession. Following this rationale, this study, and thus the following section of literature review, focuses on trainees' experiences of working with clients, rather than counselling training in general.

2.3.4 Beginning Clinical Practice

The literature on beginning clinical practice in counselling (and other interrelated fields) is informed by diverse types of research: studies exploring novice trainees' overall experiences of training (Hill, Sullivan, Knox, & Schlosser, 2007; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Williams, Judge, Hill, & Hoffman, 1997) and novice therapists' experiences of practice (Schwing, LaFollette, Steinfeldt, & Wong, 2011; Thériault, Gazzola, & Richardson, 2009); 'critical incidents'-based projects, which analyse trainees' logging of turning points or significant learning moments during training (Howard, Inman, & Altman, 2006; Lee, Eppler, Kendal, & Latty, 2001), and

literature on supervisory relationships and experiences (e.g. Leszcs, 2011; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993) all inform this area. The latter body of literature is only briefly tackled in this literature review, as its focus is not on trainees' experiences of clinical practice but on the supervisory relationship itself.

'Performance anxiety' is one of the main elements identified in trainees' experiences of beginning clinical practice (Friedlander, Keller, Peca-Baker, & Olk, 1986; Williams, et al., 1997). Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) reviewed the existing literature and integrated it with their own empirical findings, concluding that 'acute performance anxiety' and fear of the unknown are particularly central in beginning clinical practice. As the authors point out, trainees report trying hard to reduce 'the external observable effects (e.g. trembling and wet hands, unsteady voice)' and their internal anxiety in order to practise effectively (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003, p. 47). Orlinsky Rønnestad and Ambühl's quantitative findings corroborate this position, maintaining that 'novices definitely experience anxiety during therapy sessions' (2005, p. 152).

Research shows that practice-related anxiety exceeds the placement phase, revealing that it is common in early practice in general. For example, Williams, Judge, Hill and Hoffman (1997) researched the experiences of trainees in 'pre-practicum', the phase where trainees practise with volunteer students and peers rather than real clients. Their findings indicate that trainees are anxious about client terminations, in-session silences, discussion of specific topics (e.g. sex) and cultural difference, and are finally concerned with their own performance. Similarly, Hill, Sullivan, Knox and Schlosser's (2007) qualitative analysis of five trainees' weekly journal-entries on practising with their peers, revealed that trainees were anxious about 'doing the right thing' and 'not knowing what to do' during practice. Studies on graduate novice practitioners also identify anxiety as a central practice-related experience. Schwing, LaFollette, Steinfeldt and Wong (2011) interviewed three novice graduate practitioners and also analysed entries in their personal journals; their findings point to diverse types of anxiety, such as establishing a rapport, not being perceived as incompetent and blaming themselves for client dropout.

It becomes evident that novice practitioners often experience practice-related anxiety, regardless of whether they are counselling their peers or real clients and whether they are trainees or graduates. Grafanaki (2010a) argues that anxiety may have a negative impact on trainees and their sense of self, which, consequently is linked to practice, given the centrality of the therapist's use of self in this process (Wosket, 2010). Therefore, the trainees' anxiety and its impact on the self is a topic that ought to be carefully addressed during counsellor education.

Parallel to anxiety, Feelings of Incompetence (FoI), i.e., 'a counsellor's belief that his or her ability, judgement and/or effectiveness as a counsellor is absent, reduced or challenged internally' (Thériault & Gazzola, 2008, p. 229) are commonly reported by practitioners, specifically in early practice (McLeod, 2009). For example, in their research on the phenomenon of clinical 'impasses' during training, De Stefano et al. describe beginning practice as a process of 'erosion' of trainees' 'sense of competence or efficacy' (2007, p. 42). Their findings indicate that when impasses occur, trainees are affected at a cognitive, emotional and behavioural level, often feeling inadequate and overwhelmed with uncertainty. Orlinsky and colleagues' work confirm this view, pointing out that the most salient difficulty for novices in practice is professional self-doubt (Orlinsky, Rønnestad, et al., 2005). Lee, Eppler, Kendal, and Latty's (2001) study on critical incidents during counsellor education also point to feelings of incompetence, and so does Thériault, Gazzola and Richardson's (2009) study on graduate novice practioners' experiences. Such feelings were also present in Turner, Gibson et al.'s personal account of counselling training: the authors point out the demanding character of beginning counselling practice and disclose struggling 'with oscillating feelings of competence/incompetence and confidence/doubt' (2008, p. 179). Just like anxiety, these feelings can also interfere with trainees' fitness to practise (Barden, 2005) and require the field's attention.

The fluctuation of trainees' self-confidence is present in other studies as well, elucidating its interdependency to feedback and others' reactions. For example, Folkes-Skinner, Elliott and Wheeler (2010) explored one trainee's experience at three stages of her training (prior to placement, week six and week eleven) and

pointed to the variation of self-confidence in relation to client contact and supervision feedback. Daniels and Larson (2001) investigated the impact of performance feedback on trainees' self-efficacy and anxiety, and found that these fluctuated based on the feedback received. Similarly, Bischoff, Barton, Thober and Hawley's (2002) investigation of impact on trainee self-confidence, pointed to client experience as one of the main factors, alongside supervision and peer contact, that influence trainees' confidence. This finding is supported by further research and theory indicating that trainees often set high and unrealistic expectations for themselves and link self-evaluation with client reactions and improvement (Lee, et al., 2001; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). As a consequence, negative client experiences (e.g. dropout, 'stuckness', suicide) as well as unconstructive feedback by peers and supervisors can be detrimental to the trainee's well-being, as their practitioner-self is still fragile and depends mostly on external evaluations (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). This body of literature indicates the interconnectedness between external feedback and trainees' confidence, and by extension, to their practice.

A fundamental source of feedback for counsellors in training is clinical supervision. Regular supervision is a central requirement for membership in UK professional bodies (BACP, 2010; COSCA, 2012); its main purpose is to safeguard the client through promoting the development of the counsellor, monitoring their work and educating them (Barden, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2013). Alongside these functions, the supervisory relationship is also there to support the trainee (Barden, 2001; Connor, 1994; Henderson & Bailey, 2009), without however taking the place of personal therapy (Dryden, 1994a). Scaife argues that one task of the supervisor is to identify the trainee's anxiety and any feelings of incompetence, bring those to her awareness and 'use them to take the work forward' (2010, p. 62). Given that 'promoting the development and wellbeing of the counsellor' is a way to safeguard the client (Barden, 2001, p. 44), identifying and discussing potential feelings of incompetence and anxiety in supervision can prevent them from interfering with clinical work (Scaife, 2010). This need becomes more prominent when the supervisee or trainee is foreign and may encounter issues of acculturation and

foreign-related anxiety (Ng & Smith, 2012; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). This evinces the central role that supervision has in a trainee's demanding journey and demonstrates its relevance to this investigation as a source of support but also feedback regarding the novice trainee's practice.

Overall, existing literature suggests that beginning clinical practice is a demanding process that generates anxiety and impacts on the trainee's sense of self and perceived efficacy. Self-efficacy and confidence are largely dependent on experiences and relationships with peers, supervisors and, of course, clients. While significant, these conclusions derive from a body of literature that does not take into consideration the trainees' socio-cultural background. Participants' ethnicity is often ignored (e.g. Howard, et al., 2006; Lee, et al., 2001; Thériault, et al., 2009); even when diversity is explicitly acknowledged, there is no contemplation of its potential significance. For example, Hill et al. (2007) report that their sample consists of four European-American and one 'multiracial' participant; Williams et al. (1997) involve six White and one African-American trainee. From the thirty-nine mainly American participants in Bischoff and colleagues' (2002) study, two were Hispanic, one African American and one Asian. Skovholt and Rønnestad's study (1992) included ninety-six whites and four participants from 'other ethnic groups'. None of these researchers however comment further on participants' ethnicity and its potential impact on the trainee experience.

An exception to this norm can be identified in Schwing et al.'s (2011) study, which involved three participants: one Asian-American, one Caucasian-American and one African-American. Although ethnic diversity is not the focus of this research, the authors point out that participants' 'willingness to reveal personal "weakness" is personally and contextually bound' (2011, p. 61) and draw upon literature on the significance of 'saving face' in Eastern cultures (Bang & Park, 2009). Nonetheless, this seems a fairly limited and unilateral consideration of the possible influence of trainees' ethnicity on their training experience, especially for a study based on three trainees' experiences, two of whom do not belong to the predominantly white culture. That said culture- or ethnic-specific emotional responses or traits are not the focus of this thesis' investigation.

The failure of this body of literature to address the potential impact of cultural diversity on this demanding and potentially overwhelming phase of counsellor professional development illuminates a gap that needs to be filled. The need to explore the experiences of counselling trainees from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds has also been highlighted in literature tackling the issue of internationalisation of counselling and psychotherapy training both in the US (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; Marsella & Pedersen, 2004; Ng & Noonan, 2012) and the UK (Pattison & Robson, 2013). In his introduction to a Special Issue of the *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* on international students and counsellor education, Ng (2012) pointed out that:

> What is essentially lacking in the literature is the knowledge and understanding of the training issues and experiences of international counseling students and graduates, despite their presence in counseling training programmes over a lengthy period (...)
>
> (Ng, 2012, p. 1)

This necessity will become even more apparent through consideration of the literature on multicultural counselling training, that is, the area of literature that is concerned with the presence of cultural diversity in counsellor education. In the following section I offer a critical appraisal of the key advances and debates in this field, which then leads to a discussion of foreign counselling trainees' experiences of training.

2.3.5 Intercultural Counselling

We live in a globalised, culturally diverse world (Lago, 2010; McLeod, 2009); as a consequence for the counselling profession, 'the world (in the shape of a client) can come into our interviewing room' (Lago, 2011, p. 5), making the therapeutic setting increasingly multicultural. Prior to any further discussion on this topic, it is important to clarify some key terms to avoid confusion.

In the relevant literature, the terms 'multicultural' (McLeod, 2009; Sue, Arredondo, & Mcdavis, 1992), 'cross-cultural' (Vontress & Jackson, 2004)), 'transcultural' (d'Ardenne & Mahtani, 1999; Eleftheriadou, 1994) and 'intercultural' (Kareem &

Littlewood, 1992) are often used interchangeably, despite the distinct 'philosophical and political discourses' they belong in (Dhillon-Stevens, 2012, p. 56), to broadly refer to encounters between therapists and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds and the impact of culture on therapy. To avoid confusion, I use these terms following the prevailing discourse in the field of intercultural communication, where they derive from. Specifically, I use the term 'intercultural' to refer to communication that takes place between two or more people of different cultural backgrounds and 'multicultural' to reflect a pluralism of socio-cultural identities (Gudykunst, 2000; 2002). So, in this thesis I use 'intercultural' counselling to describe a relationship, process or encounter between people from different cultures and 'multicultural' to denote the plurality of cultures (e.g. in a training programme). The terms 'cross-cultural' and 'transcultural' are not used (except in the direct quotations of scholars).

As suggested earlier, the continuous cultural enrichment of the American population in the 1970s and the failure of counsellors and mental health professionals to meet the needs of culturally different clients, led to the development of the concept of multi-, inter-, trans- or cross-cultural counselling (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, & Jones, 1996; Giorgis & Helms, 1978; Leong, 1996; Patterson, 1996; Sue, 1981; Sue, et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 1977). This literature remains largely American, and, perhaps reflecting American demographics, it is predominantly concerned with specific ethnic minority client groups. Weinrach and Thomas (2002) criticised the focus of literature on four inclusive minority groups from the US (Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native Americans). Vontress and Jackson (2004) agreed with this critique and so did Moodley, who argued that this tendency results in a homogenisation of 'all ethnic European cultures into a singular category 'white', thus fixing and reducing European diversity' (2007, p. 4). Other cultural traits such as gender, age, sexuality, religion, social class and disability are either investigated in terms of 'intersecting identities' with race and ethnicity (Chantler, 2005; Constantine M., 2002; Moodley & Lubin, 2008; Robinson, 1999), or else within separate bodies of literature. Language, however, is particularly neglected (Stevens & Holland, 2008), and does not even make part of the above-mentioned 'big seven' socio-cultural identities (Moodley & Lubin, 2008). As explained in the introductory section

of this chapter, to bridge the literature's gap and enrich my study, I turn to literature on bilingualism in psychotherapy, even though it falls outside the range of counselling training.

Existing literature seems to take for granted that intercultural counselling involves minority ethnic individuals as recipients of services rather than providers. The literature that puts culturally diverse counsellors at the centre of attention is very limited and focuses almost exclusively on black and minority ethnic therapists providing counselling to white clients (for example Cavenar & Spaulding, 1978; Cheng L. & Lo H., 1991; Comas-Diaz, 2010; Griffith, 1977; Iwamasa, 1997; Mirsalimi, 2010; Moodley & Dhingra, 2002; Nezu, 2010). These studies and accounts focus largely on the impact of practitioners' visibility of ethnic difference on self and practice, and are orientated towards a discussion of social inequalities and power dynamics in psychotherapy. This thesis has a primarily different focus (linguistic difference) but also argues in favour of an inclusive understanding of culture that exceeds the strict visible ethnic established norm. I agree with Kissil, Niño and Davey who stress that 'being "not from here" is a qualitatively different experience which is not accounted for in articles about race, ethnicity and the experience of minorities' (2013, p. 135). In this thesis I wanted to provide space for the exploration of a more general experience of 'not being from here' or of 'being foreign' rather than reproduce existing scholarly work on specific ethnic minority issues. For this reason, this body of literature is not included in this review.

Multicultural counselling training

The previous section highlighted the profession's realisation of the need to address the population's cultural diversity and advance counselling practice. In the early 1990s the main debate of this field was around what makes 'adequate' training that would lead to 'culturally competent' practitioners, with some scholars suggesting that specific knowledge of the client's culture facilitates a positive therapeutic outcome (e.g. Arredondo, et al., 1996; Sue, et al., 1992) and others proposing that the counsellor's sensitivity and curiosity regarding other cultures is sufficient to work adequately with people from diverse backgrounds (Patterson, 2004; Vontress &

Jackson, 2004; Weinrach & Thomas, 2002). The main argument in the latter position (in addition to the impracticality of familiarizing oneself with several cultures) has been that understanding culture as 'a description of specific client traits' can result in 'creating a stereotype in the very effort to avoid it' (Dyche & Zayas, 2001, p. 251). This debate appears to have settled (McLeod, 2009), with a consensual acceptance of the latter position by scholars, training programmes and the major professional bodies, whose accreditation criteria and ethical codes stress the need for sensitivity towards issues of diversity and development of the counsellor's own self-awareness of cultural background and attitudes to difference (ACA, 2005; BACP, 2010).

Parallel to the idea that counselling as a profession should become more sensitive to culturally diverse clients' needs, scholars became increasingly aware of the need to expand counselling training with regard to content and involved groups. Specifically, participation of culturally diverse trainees in counsellor education programmes was anticipated to enrich westerners' understanding of diversity and promote intercultural competence (Ng & Smith, 2009). This is also reflected in Pattison and Robson's suggestion that offering students 'in multicultural cohorts explicit opportunities to interact with and learn from each other (...) can promote reflective behaviour, intercultural learning and heightened awareness of students' own cultural contexts' (2013, p. 199). Studies evaluating 'multicultural competencies' both quantitatively (e.g. D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991) and qualitatively (e.g. Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000) indicate that trainees' intercultural competence is enhanced through exposure to cultural diversity:

> Classes in which racial-ethnic-cultural diversity are represented increase opportunities for participants to experience differing worldviews, and to examine assumptions and biases that encourage counsellor self-development. Although contact with culturally different persons may increase opportunities for learning, counseling training programmes tend to be under-represented by racially-ethnically diverse students and faculty.
>
> (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000, p. 228)

The tendency of the profession to incorporate culturally diverse individuals in counsellor education to benefit westerners' intercultural competence is now clear. Alongside this, appeared also the argument in favour of equal opportunities and anti-

discriminatory practice in terms of trainee recruitment, which followed the more general 'widening participation' tendency developed in higher education (Coldridge & Mickelborough, 2003). Gordon pointed out that the inclusion of 'minority' groups in training programmes was a legal necessity to avoid 'racial discrimination, both in employment and provision of services' (1993, p. 47). Indeed professional accreditation standards require programmes to demonstrate 'policies on equal opportunity and diversity issues' (BACP, 2009/2012, p. 3) and to 'make systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning' (CACREP, 2009, p. 4). The issue of power dynamics and inequalities involved in multicultural training and intercultural practice is a topic that has attracted significant attention in scholarly work. The work of Proctor (2002, 2010), provides an insightful perspective on the development and current debates of power dynamics and inequalities in the British counselling context. Similarly, the work of Chantler (2005; Chantler & Smailes, 2004) and McKenzie-Mavinga (2005, 2009, 2011) complement this literature by explicating this phenomenon through black and ethnic minorities. As explained earlier, this work as well as other studies focusing entirely on minority ethnic trainees (e.g. Gutierrez, 1982; Henfield, Owens, & Witherspoon, 2011; McNeill, Hom, & Perez, 1995; Watson, 2006, 2011) will not be reviewed here as they lie beyond the focus of this thesis.

The numbers of culturally diverse trainees in both American and British training institutions are constantly rising (Coldridge & Mickelborough, 2003; Lau & Ng, 2012; Pattison & Robson, 2013) and, as this chapter indicates, this may be both an outcome of the increasing cultural diversity of the population and a deliberate action of the profession to better equip its practitioners to provide higher quality services but it may also 'bring financial benefits to higher education institutions' (Ng & Smith, 2009, p. 58). The illumination of the demanding and anxiety-provoking character of counsellor training and practice and the importance of investigating this in depth to better support trainees (Grafanaki, 2010a; Pattison, 2003) and also ensure quality practice (Barden, 2005; Grafanaki, 2010b), renders the necessity to understand foreign counselling trainees' experiences of training and practice unambiguous. Reinforcing these positions, Smith and Ng argued that it is the training

programmes' *professional responsibility* 'to develop systematic processes and procedures to understand international counselling trainees' experiences throughout the programme of their study' (2009, pp. 281-282). These arguments illuminate the significance of projects like this one, which aims to advance knowledge of foreign counselling trainees' experiences of intercultural training, and specifically of beginning clinical practice.

In the following section, I review the few studies that address international counselling trainees' experiences of training to then conclude with an elucidation of the contribution of the current study to knowledge.

2.3.6 International Counselling Trainees (ICTs)[6]

The wider literature on counsellor education points out that non-native students need to have high intercultural competence and linguistic proficiency (Ng, 2006) as they are bound to face 'unique challenges when conducting therapy because of difficulties in understanding and responding to clients' (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004, p. 306). To that end, gaining a better understanding of non-native speaking trainees' experiences of practice seems imperative.

International counselling trainees belong to the wider group of international students, that is, individuals who study in a country other than their country of origin. Literature exploring the experiences of international students points out that this population often encounters difficulties with adjusting to the style of teaching, meeting academic requirements and understanding and adapting to the host culture. Two factors seem to play a central role in this experience, namely the 'cultural distance' between the host and the home culture and the 'length of stay' in the new environment (Lewthwaite, 1996; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010). In other words, students whose culture of origin is not very different from the host culture

[6] The term Intercultural Counselling Trainees (ICTs) is used widely in existing literature to refer to non-domestic students in counsellor education (and other related fields). Often but not exclusively, it refers to non-native speaking foreign trainees. In this chapter I follow this convention; given this thesis' interest in language as an aspect of difference, in chapter four I introduce and argue in favour of more coherence in terminology.

encounter fewer difficulties in adjustment. The same applies for students who have lived in the host culture for longer, have better language and social skills and a support network. The literature shows that international students also experience discriminatory behaviours both within and outwith the academic setting and face practical difficulties with self-expression, verbal and written communication and language proficiency (Chen, 1999; Church, 1982; Lewthwaite, 1996; Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008). As this section will demonstrate, international counselling trainees encounter similar difficulties to other foreign students. The practical and language-intensive aspect of their training however, adds more complexities to this experience.

Like the literature on novice counsellors, experiences of ICTs have also been addressed in research on intercultural supervisory relations, which focuses either on the supervisory relationship itself, or the trainees' competence (e.g. Killian, 2001; McNeill, et al., 1995; Mehr, et al., 2010; Mori, Inman, & Caskie, 2009; Ng & Smith, 2012; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). Since this literature does not explore the trainees' experiences of training or practice, it is not reviewed here in detail. In general, these studies highlight the potential for misunderstandings between culturally diverse supervisor and supervisee and the consequent failure to provide adequate support, pointing to the complexity of intercultural supervision (Killian, 2001; Mehr, et al., 2010). With regard to trainees' experiences, supervision-related studies suggest that issues of cultural difference and the interrelated struggles that foreign trainees may encounter, should be identified and addressed in supervision, especially when foreign supervisees face adaptation problems and linguistic barriers in the host environment (Ng & Smith, 2012; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). This points to the necessity to look at the specific experiences of foreign counselling trainees. The projects that are concerned with international counselling trainees' experiences of training and practice are few and reflect mainly the American context (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Pattison & Robson, 2013); in addition, only few of them endorse a qualitative research design, allowing insight into their subjective experiences

This section begins with Pattison's (2003) work, which is the only study that my review identified as exploring foreign counselling trainees' experiences in Britain.

Aiming to better understand and therefore enhance international students' training experiences, Pattison (2003) interviewed twelve trainees on a one-year full time M.Ed. in Guidance and Counselling that was specifically designed for international students. Participants came from various African, Asian and European countries. The study offers an insight into diversity among international students' expectations of training, processes of professional development and perceived learning outcomes. Data analysis was informed by the principles of grounded theory, though cluster themes were constructed '*a priori* rather than emerging from the data' (Pattison, 2003, p. 108). In general, findings indicate some homogeneity across the diverse cultures, but also highlight culture-specific elements in counselling training experience (e.g. expression of feelings). The qualitative nature of this investigation advances understanding of international students' experiences of training in the UK, making this work particularly pertinent in the field of multicultural training in Britain. In relation to this thesis, Pattison's findings indicate that international students in general value the process of cultural immersion as a way of improving their language skills. This depicts the interrelation between language and culture and the context-dependency of second language use proficiency, positions that, as explained earlier, underpin this thesis as well. Nonetheless, the specific training programme undertaken by Pattison's (2003) participants did not involve a placement, that is, the requirement to counsel real clients. Therefore, while this is study is informative, it does not shed light on the specific aspect that is at the core of this investigation, i.e. counselling practice in a second language and culture.

The experience of intercultural/interlinguistic practice is touched upon by Ilhan, Korkut-Owen, Furr and Parikh (2012), whose work is the only other identified non-American study on international students' experience of counselling training. Unlike Pattison (2003) who focused on one training programme that did not encompass clinical practice, Ilhan et al. (2012) endeavoured to investigate ICTs' experiences of training across different institutions in Turkey. They recruited twenty international counselling students from five different academic training providers. Fourteen of them were enrolled at undergraduate, three at masters and three at doctoral level programmes. This means that only six participants had experiences of working with

clients, yet it is not clear from the paper whether these were real clients or peers. Participants were asked to complete a semi-structured questionnaire entailing seven 'open-ended' questions about their expectations, experiences of training and plans for the future. Participants' replies were then clustered under the same theme (question), and similar answers were merged, leading to a summary of participants' replies for each question.

With regards to experiences during training, participants disclosed encountering issues with language proficiency both in the academic setting and their counselling practice, as well as other difficulties with cultural adaptation, such as religion, relationships, food and accommodation. Unfortunately the study offers very little insight into participants' subjective experiences of training and even less of practising in a foreign environment, as the research design and methods do not invite deep explorations. For instance, the questionnaire's item four formulated as: 'Did you experience any problems in areas like counseling sessions, speaking and writing, participating in teaching activities or other academic areas? If yes, please describe briefly' (Ilhan, et al., 2012, p. 61), is rather closed, directing participants to report problems in specific areas rather than share diverse experiences. Nevertheless, Ilhan et al.'s (2012) study indicates that the most frequently reported difficulty was associated with students' proficiency in Turkish and that 'six participants indicated problems particular to practising counseling' (2012, p. 64). The study also points out that even 'the Turkish origin' of some trainees did not preclude language-related problems in training, suggesting perhaps the dynamic and context-dependent nature of language that may change across generations, regions etc. Overall, Ilhan et al.'s (2012) study addresses the diverse elements of counsellor education in a general manner, falling short of elucidating the individual aspects of this process and particularly counselling practice across cultures.

A study that examines in more detail the various features of training was conducted by Ng (2006). This study investigates counsellor educators' perceptions of and experiences with three groups of students: western international counselling trainees (WICTs), non-western ICTs (NWICTs) and domestic students in the United States. Although Ng's study provides educators' perceptions of trainees' experiences and

therefore is not really representative of ICTs' experiences, it is very relevant to this thesis for two reasons. First, as stated, it acknowledges and examines diverse aspects of counselling training experience, illuminating the language-related and communication issues that international students may encounter in their interactions with clients. Second, like Ilhan et al.'s (2012) study, it elucidates the socio-cultural character of language, corroborating the position that has been adopted in this thesis with regards to language.

Using survey methods, Ng (2006) investigated trainers' understanding of their students' concerns with academic, language and cultural adjustment issues, emotional distress, relationships with peers, clients and supervisors, as well as issues of compatibility between learning style and attitudes to mental health. Their overall findings suggest that non-western ICTs encounter more problems regarding language proficiency issues and communication barriers with clients, difficulties in clinical courses and conflicts with theoretical approaches and cultural adjustment than their peers from western countries and the US. Ng points out that many of the challenges that non-western students 'seem to encounter appear to be related to language proficiency and cultural difference' (2006, p. 13), illuminating the necessity to address these issues in more depth. In spite of the study's emphasis on comparison among the diverse groups of trainees, it is admittedly fairly informative of western and non-western international students' experiences of counselling training and practice. Interestingly, this study also indicates that in spite of cultural similarities, western international trainees:

> may still experience challenges related to relocating and adjusting to an unfamiliar environment. These students' difficulties in communicating with clients may result from cultural differences in word usage, accent and colloquialisms, even though English may be their first language.
>
> (Ng, 2006, p. 13)

As stated earlier, Ng's work points to the significance of culture and of familiarity with the specific contexts when using a language, illuminating the socio-cultural nature of language proficiency and the usefulness of understanding the concepts of native/non-native speaker from a broader perspective.

The following three studies explore international trainees' experiences of counselling training in the United States from different research approaches. A quantitative study conducted by Ng and Smith (2009) collected data from fifty-six international and eighty-two domestic trainees in various counselling (and interrelated) programmes, all of which involved clinical placement. International trainees came from diverse African, Asian, European, Caribbean and South American countries and had accumulated different amounts of counselling experience. Participants were asked to rate their training experiences by completing a thirteen-item Likert-type scale (1=never, 5=all the time). Results indicate that ICTs face several difficulties 'at least sometimes', with English language proficiency problems (including interacting with clients) ranking the highest. Other difficulties involved emotional distress, problems in academic and clinical settings, issues with acculturation[7] and relational problems with peers and staff members. International students also appeared to struggle with understanding and accepting the Western medical model; finally, they mentioned feelings of being discriminated against both by their peers and their educators. These findings were then compared to those of the domestic students and ICTs were found to experience the above-mentioned difficulties more often than their domestic counterparts. Nonetheless, both groups scored similarly with regard to belief about contributing to the programme, self-efficacy, experiences with mentoring by tutors and experiencing emotional distress. In summary, the study concludes that ICTs encounter more academic, language, culture, relational and discrimination-related problems; they also encounter more problems when communicating with clients due to language barriers and conflicts with the theoretical approaches and attitude towards health and illness. In order to improve the validity of the project, results were compared to Ng's earlier project on perceptions of the educators of ICTs (Ng, 2006), and many similarities were found (Ng & Smith, 2009). Ng and Smith highlight the necessity of better support for international students during training:

[7] The term 'acculturation' is used to describe a 'multidimensional construct in which the person has options of adaptation in the new culture, in the light of how welcoming this environment will respond to the foreigner' (Barreto, 2013, p. 337). This puts the emphasis on the interaction between host culture and individual (intersubjectivity) rather than on merely on the individual's own actions, as suggested by terms like assimilation, integration and adaptation (Berry, 1997).

> Given the greater degree of challenges and difficulties confronting international trainees, the support and services they need from host institutions should correspondingly be greater than those needed by domestic students
>
> (Ng & Smith, 2009, p. 66)

Although Ng and Smith's (2009) inclusive design provides information about several aspects of counselling training and experiences, its quantitative nature does not allow the emergence of subjective experiences and therefore is rather limited in terms of richness of experience. Additionally, its comparative character to domestic trainees leads to an evaluation of experiences of training rather than an in-depth understanding of foreign students' accounts. Nonetheless, the fact that language-related difficulties scored the highest among the diverse items supports the suggestion that language is a central issue in international students' experiences of training and practising with clients. All this highlights the need to further explore this aspect of training in depth.

The final two relevant studies identified in this review investigate international students' experiences of training in the field of Marital and Family Therapy (MFT). Mittal and Wieling (2006) explored doctoral students in MFT accredited programmes across the US. They collected data from nine phone interviews, three face-to-face interviews and one email survey. Thirteen participants from eight different countries contributed to this study, with only two participants being native English speakers. Data was analysed thematically using 'the modified Van Kaam's method as described in Moustakas (1994)' (Mittal & Wieling, 2006, p. 372). Their themes illuminate different aspects of trainees' experiences in relation to general factors, such as difficulties with cultural adjustment and frustration with the curriculum, but also in relation to self and others. With regard to self, ICTs disclosed negotiating 'insider' and 'outsider' identities, feeling inferior and uncomfortable with apparent differences such as accents and visible ethnic characteristics, as well as anxiety about proficiency in English. This elucidates the demanding character of counselling training and its impact on the self and confidence, as well as the centrality of second-language use.

Regarding their 'relationships with systems external to self' (Mittal & Wieling, 2006, p. 374), i.e. other people, participants reported again a negotiation of insider and outsider identity, this time associated with their peers, supervisors, tutors and clients' reactions to their ethnicity. In addition, their experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness appear associated with familiarity or not with others' cultural backgrounds and perceived support or acceptance by others. Participants in this study also reported feelings of marginalization, disappointment and even offence in receiving discriminatory comments by clients or perceived neglect by faculty. These findings corroborate research on counselling trainees' experiences of training regardless of 'foreignness' discussed earlier (e.g. Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003) exhibiting the centrality of other-experiences (clients, peers, supervisors, trainers) and hence the unpredictable nature of counsellor education experience. Finally this study looked also at ICTs' coping strategies during training, and found that ICTs learn how to improve their self-confidence, stand up for themselves and endorsed 'nonquitting' attitudes.

Overall, Mittal and Wieling's (2006) work is an invaluable addition to the relevant literature as it offers a multifaceted understanding of international doctoral students' experiences in Marital and Family Therapy training. Following the study's interest in ICTs' 'experiences across (a) theory (b) research (c) clinical training, supervision, and practice' (2006, p. 371), it becomes apparent that the researchers were aiming for breadth rather than depth, inviting further exploration of each one of these aspects individually. Their findings manifest the importance of practice-related experiences and of others' reactions and support, as well as the importance of second-language use in intercultural counselling practice. The study's location in the US and its exploration of a specific modality (MFT), elucidates the necessity for further research in that direction from different perspectives.

Finally, the other study investigating the topic of ICTs in the field of Marital and Family Therapy comes from Morris and Lee (2004). Their study investigated clients' experiences of working with a non-native speaking trainee therapist (or co-therapist) as well as some trainees' experiences of the same phenomenon. Morris and Lee collected data from a seven-item questionnaire distributed to fifteen clients and

generated interview data from four non-native speaking trainees, only one of whom had experience of working with real clients (the other three were at a pre-practicum phase, practising with peers). Clients' responses are not particularly pertinent to this thesis and therefore are presented succinctly. In general, findings indicate that clients experience both challenges (e.g. understanding trainees' accent, bridging cultural differences) and opportunities (e.g. not assuming understanding). It is worth mentioning that the challenges identified were not seen as stumbling blocks to the therapeutic process. More importantly, however, interviews with the four international trainees indicate that issues of language and cultural difference are central and experienced both as a benefit (e.g. prevent them from jumping to conclusions) and as a barrier (e.g. limited understanding of culture, struggling with understanding linguistically). Trainees also mentioned that better understanding of the American language and culture requires time and extra effort.

Although Morris and Lee's (2004) study is the only one to really focus on the experience of interlinguistic counselling practice during training, the focus of this thesis, their findings are rather disappointing in terms of richness of experience. Perhaps focusing on one perspective (either clients or trainees) would have allowed more space for deeper analysis and better understanding of ICTs' subjective experiences of practice. Still, the findings underline the challenging character of practising in a second language, as well as the significance of being familiar with the culture in which one practises, illuminating the interrelatedness of the two concepts.

On a final note, my review of research on international counselling trainees reveals that these studies tend to focus on negative aspects of participants' experiences (e.g struggles, stress), rather than present a broader perspective of this phenomenon. While this is the norm, however, Mittal and Wieling's (2006) work discusses international trainees' positive experience of receiving support from their trainers, peers and clinical supervisors and satisfaction with the programme. Similarly, Pattison (2003) underlines trainees' learning outcomes. Finally, Ng (2006) and Ng and Smith (2009) stress ICTs' self-confidence in believing that they contribute to their training environment and high levels of self-efficacy. This demonstrates that

multicultural counselling training and beginning intercultural counselling practice are not one-sided, negative experiences as they may initially appear to be.

2.3.7 Summary of Section

In this first section of this literature review, I started by mapping the various developmental phases of the profession, highlighting the significance and demanding character of the beginning stages of professional development. This invited exploration of the field of counsellor education, which in its turn pointed to the centrality of beginning counselling practice. Today's globalised world, however, renders cultural diversity and multiculturalism an intrinsic feature of the profession, and as a consequence, of counsellor education as well. Exploration of these two areas of literature, namely intercultural counselling and multicultural counselling training underlined the necessity to investigate the experience of foreign counselling trainees. Critical appraisal of the few studies on international counselling trainees leads to a number of conclusions. First, their limited number highlights the necessity to conduct more research on this population, especially in contexts other than the US, to better support trainees' needs and improve their training experience (Grafanaki, 2010b; Pattison, 2003). Second, as the existing literature addresses trainees' needs and experiences in a holistic manner and often from a quantitative perspective that does not offer insight into subjective experiences, it would be useful to conduct in-depth, qualitative research on foreign students' experiences of the different aspects of their training (e.g. clinical practice, supervision, class work). Given the central role of clinical practice in counselling training identified earlier, it is suggested here to start by conducting research in this direction. Finally, as language proficiency issues are central in all studies even without addressing language as a particular factor of difference, it is clear that second-language use is an essential element of the international trainee experience that calls for further consideration.

The next section of the literature review looks at this specific 'feature' of intercultural practice, namely, interlinguistic practice. As explained, literature on second language use is scarce within the domain of multicultural counselling training. Therefore, the next section looks at bilingualism in psychotherapy from a

wider perspective. Having identified the necessity of investigating second-language use in relation to beginning counselling practice, it is also important to remember this thesis' position in relation to language, which is understood as interrelated with culture. Second language use and nativeness/non-nativeness are seen from an inclusive perspective that is not limited to linguistics and grammar. The first section of this literature review demonstrated that findings from studies on international counselling trainees support this notion, by pointing out that language proficiency is not associated exclusively with strict linguistic elements (e.g. vocabulary, syntax) but involves other socio-cultural factors (such as accent, colloquialisms) that seem related to the foreigners' familiarity with the local culture (e.g. Ng and Smith, 2009). Unfortunately, the existing literature on bilingualism in psychotherapy does not take the same stance in relation to language. As the following section will indicate, bilingualism and native/non-native speakers are conceptualised from within an 'inflexible', linguistically based perspective. Although this thesis challenges the usefulness of this position, this literature is a valuable source of information on the phenomenon of interlinguistic/intercultural practice and therefore it is reviewed.

2.4 Bilingualism and Psychotherapy[8]

2.4.1 Introduction

As explained, this second body of literature advances understanding of the impact of linguistic difference and bilingualism in the therapeutic encounter. In that sense, it is not related to counsellor education, like the previous one, but to therapeutic practice in general. I start this section by illuminating briefly the phenomenon of bilingualism, as experienced by immigrants[9] in host cultures. It quickly becomes evident that bilingualism is associated with identity formation and emotional expression, both of which are pertinent to therapeutic practice. I then enter the realm

[8] Given that literature on this topic is located in a historical and theoretical context where the term 'counselling' was not in use, in this section the term 'psychotherapy' is used almost exclusively.

[9] Individuals who were born and socialised in one country and then relocated to a different country, in which they stayed long enough to go through a process of acculturation (Kissil, et al., 2013).

of psychotherapy by looking into literature on bilingual clients. While bilingual clients are not at the core of this investigation, relevant scholarly work illuminates the potential impact of bilingualism on individuals within the therapeutic context. This section is followed by literature on bilingual therapists, which is limited and often outcome-oriented, stressing the necessity for more research in this population's subjective experiences.

2.4.2 General Experience of Bilingualism

> Loss or partial loss of the use of a mother tongue and inadequate skill in the host language is disempowering and can become a 'dis-ability', leaving one potentially unable to participate in professional or social life. Even those who are fluent sometimes just stop talking because there is too much effort involved in translating or explaining
>
> (Uphoff, 2011, p. 246)

The experience of bilingualism and second language use are at the centre of many immigrants' autobiographical accounts (e.g. Antin, 1912/1969; Dorfman, 1998; Said, 1999; Wong, 1945/1989; Zhengdao Ye, 2004) and are closely associated with impact on self and identity and emotional expression. For instance, Eva Hoffman's widely-read autobiography *Lost in Translation* (1991) that portrays her experience of fleeing from Poland and starting a new life in Canada as a young teenager, entails a vivid account of how English, an initially emotion-free language was gradually transformed into an affective language through its use in an intimate relationship:

> 'I love you' I murmur to the man beside me (…) For a long time, it was difficult to speak these most intimate phrases, hard to make English -that language of will and abstraction- shape itself into the tonalities of love. (…) But now the language has entered my body, has incorporated itself in the softest tissue of my being.
>
> (Hoffman, 1991, p. 245)

Drawing upon her personal experience of bilingualism and 'informal conversations' with other bilinguals, Imberti, like Hoffman, identifies the emotional superficiality of the second language and the centrality of language as a 'cultural frame of reference' (2007, p. 71). She also discusses three additional elements that, in her experience, prevail in non-native immigrants' experiences of second language use and 'may

conceal the real self' (2007, p. 70). First, she points to feelings of 'disconnection and distancing from both inner feelings and the language to express them' (Imberti, 2007, p. 72), as a result of people's various stories that remain untold. Secondly, the author highlights society's tendency to determine individuals' statuses based on language use, maintaining that lack of linguistic proficiency is perceived as a sign of low education, class and socioeconomic status. Finally, with reference to the individual's self-evaluation, she asserts that:

> The limitations of an "artificial" language conceal the intellectually mature, eloquent, and self-confident self within the nonnative speaker. When the foreign language predominates in conversations, the person no longer communicates in the language that provides the comfort of a familiar frame of reference, and the relational context that sustains identification with the self in relation with the other becomes unnatural
>
> (Imberti, 2007, p. 73)

Imberti, a psychotherapist herself, does not refer to her experience of practising therapeutically in a second language. Nevertheless, both Hoffman's and Imberti's accounts portray beautifully the challenges (practical and emotional) related to second language use, as well as the tremendous impact that this may have on the self. Though not products of empirical research and unconnected to the therapeutic context, these accounts elucidate the potential complexity of emotional expression in a second language and the associated impact on identity that any bilingual individual, including non-native clients and practitioners may be experiencing, making them particularly pertinent to this investigation.

Charlotte Burck is one of the few scholars who addressed bilingual individuals' experiences of 'living in two languages' through an empirical investigation. Burck (2004; 2005; 2011) explored the phenomenon of 'multilingual living' through analysis of research interviews and autobiographical accounts of bilinguals. Her analysis indicates that bilinguals experience themselves differently in each language, reporting a different 'sense of subjectivity, of identity and of embodiment' (Burck, 2004, p. 320). Speaking in a 'minoritised language' functioned as a marker of difference for her participants. In common with Hoffman's and Imberti's accounts, participants in this study associated using their mother tongue with a sense of

intimacy, belonging and authenticity. Using a second language was experienced as formal, humour-free and introducing distance from the self and the language itself. In some cases, second language use was associated with a particular sense of freedom of expression that was not available in a mother tongue.

These accounts point to the significance of bilingualism as a phenomenon and in particular, its impact on the self and identity as well as emotional expression. This elucidates the usefulness of investigating bilingualism in relation to counselling training: the centrality of developing self-awareness in counsellor education (Scaife, 2010), as well as the use of the therapist's self in practice (Wosket, 2010) make the impact of second-language use on self a subject worth investigating. For example, how does second language use and the consequent altered sense of subjectivity and identity (Burck, 2004) influence a trainee's development of her practitioner-self? Correspondingly, if, as Hoffman (1991) suggests second language use is emotion-free, how can non-native practitioners engage with deep explorations of their clients' emotional worlds?

Having introduced the potential complexity of bilingualism for therapeutic practice, I now move on to the actual body of literature that may offer insight into these phenomena.

2.4.3 Presence of Bilingualism in Psychotherapy

The themes identified above, namely emotional expression in a second language and the impact of bilingualism on the self, are also the main themes tackled in the field of psychotherapy. Despite language's centrality to therapeutic practice and process (Clauss, 1998; Heaton, 2010), research on second language use in psychotherapy is scarce and addresses mainly the impact of the client's bilingualism on the therapeutic process as seen from a psychoanalytic perspective. This literature is reviewed here in spite of this thesis' interest in *practitioner* experience of second language use, for two reasons: first, the literature on bilingual clients is the basis upon which the limited research on bilingual therapists is developed, often complementing it. Therefore, looking only at the latter phenomenon would lack context. Secondly, this literature explores the subject of affective processing and emotional expression in a

second language, which may be of great relevance to bilingual therapists' practice, given the centrality of emotion-work in psychotherapy. This latter area has also been addressed by the disciplines of applied linguistics and cognition, which informed the early literature on bilingualism in psychoanalysis. A concise discussion of the information provided from this field is also included here to illuminate its links to and differences from the field of psychotherapy.

As the literature on bilingual clients is informative but peripheral, it will be presented concisely, allowing more space for the restricted literature on bilingual therapists.

Bilingual Clients

Clinical case studies referring to bilingual clients[10] date back to Freud's early work [e.g. 'Anna O' (Breuer & Freud, 1891)]. Nonetheless, the explicit use of language(s) in therapy is not specifically addressed until the mid-twentieth century, when Buxbaum (1949) and Greenson (1950), two bilingual psychoanalysts concerned with 'the oedipal psychosexual conflicts, and the dynamic interactions between ego, id and superego' (Bowker & Richards, 2004, p. 463) published case studies of bilingual clients and how mother and second language were used to inform the analytic process. This initial interest in the topic is followed by a period of paucity for almost twenty-five years, until Marcos and his colleagues rekindled the psychoanalytic interest in bilingualism with more publications on bilingual clients, this time tackling the possibility of misdiagnosis alongside the subject of second language as an emotional barrier (Marcos, Eisma, & Guimon, 1977; Marcos, 1976; Marcos & Urcuyo, 1979). From the early 1990s onwards, this literature moves away from its purely psychoanalytic framework and starts involving findings from interrelated disciplines, such as linguistics (e.g. Pérez Foster, 1992) and cognition (e.g. Amati-Mehler, Argentieri, & Canestri, 1990). The psychoanalytic exploration of the impact of clients' bilingualism on therapy follows the theoretical framework of *linguistic independence phenomenon,* according to which different language systems are

[10] The term 'client' is used here for those who seek therapeutic help, to refer to a range of terms found in the literature such as 'patient' and 'service user'.

associated with respective experiences and cognitive structures (Javier & Marcos, 1989). This is explicit for example in Pérez Foster's work, who states that 'each language code has its own stream of associations between message words and events in the ideational system' (1992, p. 63). This perspective is rooted in what is understood as the 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis' that has been 'intuitively accepted by some anthropologists, writers and therapists' (de Zulueta, 1995, p. 181). In an oversimplification, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also known as the concept of *linguistic relativity,* suggests that language determines how individuals perceive the world (Lucy, 1992)[11].

Having provided an overview of the historic and theoretical context of this literature, I can now enter a more detailed exploraton of the field in relation to content. The general assumption in the psychoanalytic literature on bilingualism is that early experiences associated with a person's mother tongue (L1) may not be accessible through the use of a second language (L2). Buxbaum's (1949) and Greenson's (1950) client work material suggests that clients' use of L2 in analysis may function as a defence mechanism to confront anxiety associated with early experiences that took place in L1. It also puts forward the idea that use of the client's mother tongue in therapy can evoke repressed experiences. These positions remain central in this body of literature throughout the years. However, while initial emphasis has been on the structure of the bilingual mind (e.g. Buxbaum, 1949; Greenson, 1950), from the mid 1970s onwards, the focus starts to shift to the impact of bilingualism on the client's affective experience and emotional expression. For example, Marcos (1976) views language as 'an emotional barrier'; Aragno and Schlachet (1996) use vignettes to illustrate that using a client's L1 does not only facilitate access to repressed memories but also evokes the interrelated emotive intensity of those experiences.

[11] Benjamin Lee Whorf, based on Edward Sapir's (1921) theory of language being an influential factor of thought and culture and not just as a reflection of them, suggested that: 'users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations' and therefore 'are not equivalent as observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world' (Whorf, 1956, p. 221).

The overall idea that clients doing analysis in a second language have an emotional distance from the early experiences that occurred in L1, is a common element also in the work of Clauss (1998), de Zulueta (1995), Pérez Foster (1996, 1998) and Amati-Mehler, Argentieri and Canestri (1990).

The role of bilingualism as a defence mechanism and a motive for emotional distancing from specific experiences is also addressed in an interrelated body of literature that focuses on 'code switching' as a technique for therapeutic practice with bilinguals. Code switching refers to the process where 'individuals change language frequently, often within the same sentence' (Edwards, 1994, p. 3). The work of Pitta, Marcos and Alpert (1978) as well as Javier and Marcos (1989) and Javier (1989), is pioneering in this area suggesting that bilingual clients who are given the opportunity to use two languages in therapy may achieve deeper analysis: while L1, a more emotionally charged language, allows exploration and expression of emotions, L2 can function as a coping mechanism and allow exploration of early, perhaps intolerable experiences. Movahedi's detailed analysis of 'flight into a second language' (1996, p. 837) in his own work with bilingual clients supports this suggestion as well. More recently, Verdinelli and Biever (2009), Tehrani and Vaughan (2009), Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) and Costa (2010) also provided evidence that is in line with this same notion. Movahedi (1996) also explored the impact of language use on transference[12] phenomena, a topic that is addressed also in Clauss' (1998) and Pérez Foster's (1992) work. More recently, Gowrisunkur, Burman and Walker (2002) illuminated a case where the therapist matched a foreign client's ethnicity and native language and the positive impact that this had on the therapeutic outcome. Countertransference towards the bilingual client has also been addressed in the related literature, with some studies looking at monolingual therapists' reactions to their clients' non-nativeness (Bowker & Richards, 2004; Stevens & Holland, 2008) and others at the bilingual therapist's perspective. While

[12]'Transference is understood as the repetition of past conflicts with significant others, such that feelings, attitudes and behaviours belonging rightfully in those earlier relationships are displaced on to the therapist'. 'Countertransference is the therapist's transference to the client's material' (Feltham & Horton, 2006, p. 65).

transference phenomenona are not of relevance here, countertransference will be tackled in the next section.

Overall the literature on bilingual clients agrees with the previously mentioned autobiographical accounts suggesting that second language use impacts on bilinguals' sense of self and their emotional expression and processing. The latter is corroborated by research in applied linguistics and cognitive psychology, which also uses as a starting point the literature on bilingualism in psychoanalysis. Although located in a different field and therefore interested in different aspects of this phenomenon, it is worth exceeding the field of psychotherapy and incorporating a concise consideration of this literature. This will offer a different perspective on emotional processing and illuminate the interdisciplinary potential for bilingualism in psychotherapy.

This literature examines bilinguals' perceptions of affective processing and their ability to express emotions in different languages (Dewaele, 2010; Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko, 2005; Wierzbicka, 2004). It also investigates bilinguals' memory of (Ayçiçegi-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2009) and physiological reactions to (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçegi-Dinn, 2009) words and phrases in L1 and L2. In general, results support the relevant literature in the field of psychotherapy: mother tongue is found to have superior emotional resonance as it is linked to infancy (Altarriba, 2008; Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçegi-Dinn, 2009; Pavlenko, 2008) and acquisition of second language after early childhood may lead to a language detached from emotion (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002). That said, second language can be emotionally charged despite adult acquisition, when it has been learned through a 'secondary affective socialisation' process (Pavlenko, 2008). This is aligned with Hoffman's (1991) experience described earlier.

Research in these fields is predominantly experimental and therefore provides little insight into the subjective experience of living in a second language. To this end, it is worth mentioning that Aneta Pavlenko, professor of applied linguistics and leading figure in the field of bilingualism research acknowledges the value of clinical case studies in the field of psychotherapy for providing 'ground-breaking insights into

bilinguals' affective reactivity' (Pavlenko, 2012, p. 410). I would argue however, that while this may be true for bilingualism research located within the discipline of applied linguistics, existing clinical case studies do not necessarily offer informative insight into the experience of bilingualism for the field of psychotherapy. The clinical studies presented above, though concerned with bilingual clients' processes and experiences of practice, are based on (often monolingual) therapists' perceptions of the impact of second language use on therapy. It would be useful to see what bilingual clients themselves think, feel and experience when using their native or a second language in psychotherapy.

On a different note, the above-mentioned studies, both in early psychoanalytic literature and in applied linguistics, are based on the premise of viewing language and therefore second-language use as part of a cognitive function; to that end, they look at bilinguals' emotional processing in terms of cognition, ignoring entirely the embodied processes that are interrelated to this. The therapeutic process, however, and the work that occurs at an emotional level between therapist and client involve aspects other than cognition, such as embodied processes like a 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1969, 1996) or some sort of 'energy' (Cameron, 2002, 2013) that may not be appropriately understood through this type of research. Given this thesis' focus on beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice, a phenomenon that is particularly under-researched and which, as I argued, requires the exploration of a number of interrelated bodies of literature, there is no space here to review the literature exploring the presence and use of emotions in therapeutic practice. Accordingly, following this thesis' focus on language use, embodied, preverbal processes inherent in the therapeutic encounter are also not included in this review.

The next section of this literature review tackles the topic of bilingualism from the therapist's perspective.

Bilingual Therapists

The experience of providing counselling in a second language has attracted considerably less scholarly attention than bilingual clients. As suggested earlier, literature on this topic derives from studies on code switching and consequently the

focus remains largely on therapists' perceptions of clients' language use patterns rather than their experience of practice. Recent examples of this tendency include a study by Kokaliari, Gatanzarite and Berzoff (2013) investigating bilingual therapists' perspectives of their clients' use of second language and a study by Santiago-Rivera, Altarriba, Poll, Gonzalez-Miller and Cragun, (2009) exploring bilingual therapists' use of code switching as a 'technique' in their work with Hispanic clients. The latter study found that therapists use code switching as a strategy to build trust and connect with their clients, but it did not explore therapists' subjective experiences of these phenomena. Similarly, Kokaliari and colleagues (2013) interviewed nine bilingual therapists about the kinds of struggles their bilingual clients encounter, how languages and cultures are understood in therapy, the nature of transference and countertransference phenomena and lessons learned through practising with bilinguals. Although the focus has not been on the therapist bilingual experience, a participant's account illuminates an experience of receiving sarcastic comments about her foreign accent by a native speaking client. Even so, the participant does not explore how this felt for her, but commented on the function of such behaviours in therapy. This example demonstrates that while this literature may be informative about the context of bilingual therapy, it does not offer any insight into bilingual therapists' experiences, perspectives and beliefs about their use of a second language in therapeutic work, elements that can be particularly pertinent for multicultural counsellor education and intercultural practice.

The underlying purpose of the tendency to research process and client experience is unquestionably valuable. As I have argued previously in relation to counselling trainees, however, in order to provide quality services to clients, it is also important to research and enhance our understanding of the experiences of foreign therapists who work across languages and cultures and investigate the impact of non-nativeness and foreignness on their selves and their practice. A segment of the literature on bilingualism in therapy touches upon bilingual therapists' second language use. As it will become clear, the focus is often on the impact of second-language use on the therapeutic outcome rather than the therapists' subjective experience of bilingualism in intercultural practice. Alongside this stands another interrelated area of literature

that looks at immigrant therapists' experiences. As the focus of this literature is on *non-native speaking* immigrant therapists, it is also included in this section.

The literature on bilingual therapists consists of practitioners' case material from conducting therapy in a second language, as well as empirical research investigating this phenomenon. Kitron's (1992) work falls into the first category and is the earliest relevant reference identified in this review. Kitron, a 'native Israeli', presents case examples from his own work with French-speaking clients to argue that a therapist who 'speaks the foreign patient's mother tongue but lacks perfect command of that' (1992, p. 232), does not impede the therapeutic process; on the contrary, she may also advance it. Kitron identifies the issue of power asymmetries in psychotherapy and suggests that a therapist working in a second-language may reduce her potentially 'superior, omnipotent and omniscient' role (1992, p. 236). The idea that the therapist's 'imperfect' use of language is not an obstacle in therapy is also supported by Jiménez (2004), in a paper on his 'surprisingly successful' experience of conducting analysis in German, a language in which he was not fluent. For Jiménez, 'what takes place between analyst and patient goes well beyond a mere exchange of words' (2004, p. 1374); his 'successful interventions' are an outcome of '*matching'*, a 'pre-verbal process based on affect attunement between analyst and patient (...) sharing inner affective states' (2004, p. 1374). It is worth noting that Jiménez' position of second language use not impeding therapy refers to a stage where the therapeutic alliance has already been established, 'by definition, a situation of complete confusion cannot occur' (2004, p. 1370). This is echoed by one of Costa's participants who stated that: 'Once past this [initial] stage, we move to a deeper level where language just serves the purpose of getting the meaning' (Costa, 2010, p. 19). Costa's (2010) work will be discussed later in more detail in relation to bilingual therapist experience. Neither Jiménez (2004) nor Costa (2010) however, particularly problematise the potential obstacle of the therapist's second language use in forming that relational bond.

Having clarified that working in a second language is not an obstacle for analysis, Jiménez (2004), like Kitron (1992), identified an advantage in his work: his literal understanding of German facilitated his ability to offer interpretations based on the

clients' specific use of words and expressions, which might not have been noticed by native-speaking analysts[13].

Kitron's and Jiménez' work is clearly oriented towards therapeutic outcome, only briefly touching upon countertransference issues and personal experiences. For example, Kitron (1992) mentions that the therapist's attitude towards the second language used, as well as the very experience of linguistic 'imperfection', may influence the process, but does not explore its potential impact on the therapist. Jiménez (2004) refers to moments where he 'could hardly understand' his clients' speech 'for several minutes', a situation which 'certainly generated anxiety' (2004, p. 1368), but does not offer more insight on his experience. Similarly, Iannaco (2009) identifies the potential impact of working in a lingua franca on the therapeutic process but does not make any reference to the potential influence on herself. This direction is taken to some extent by Clauss (1998), a bilingual (Spanish-English) psychodynamic practitioner who also addressed the issue of second-language use in therapy through her own work. With regards to a Spanish-speaking client who continuously ignored her Hispanic background, she states that:

> The countertransference associated with this phenomenon is an awareness of being placed on one cultural experience or another, rather than the patient's ability to grasp the duality of my, and ultimately their own, bicultural/bilingual experience
>
> (Clauss, 1998, p. 193)

In addition to this succinct statement on bilingualism-related countertransference, Clauss discloses feeling 'especially skilled while at other times (...) out of sorts' (1998, p. 193) in being able to conduct therapy in two languages and briefly discusses her anxiety around appropriateness of initiating code switching. Clauss' reflexive stance and her reference to her own process even though limited, stands out from other existing work presented earlier, offering some understanding of what it might be like for a practitioner to work in a second language.

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[13] The role of language in psychoanalytic interpretations has been addressed in Iannaco's (2009) work and in greater detail in Connolly's (2002) review of the relevant literature, but given its specificity to psychoanalytic practice it is not explored further here.

This experience is further illuminated by Karamat Ali (2004). In a paper addressing the subject of working systemically with bilingual families, Karamat Ali shares his personal experience of working as a bilingual therapist. Apart from the 'awkwardness' he experiences in moments where he needs to ask for clarifications, he identifies some benefits for practice. He maintains that being bilingual facilitates an awareness of linguistic subtleties that may potentially result in misunderstandings. Moreover, he asserts that 'asking the obvious' slows the pace of the session down, allowing the client and specifically children, to clarify any confusion. While informative and certainly more insightful than previously-mentioned work, Karamat-Ali's (2004) personal experience as a bilingual therapist occupies a small part in a client and outcome-oriented piece of research, highlighting again the dearth of information on subjective experience of intercultural/interlinguistic practice.

In addition to the literature that draws from case material, stands a small body of empirical research that investigates the phenomenon of bilingual therapists conducting therapy in a second language. This work continues to be predominantly American and part of it focuses exclusively on Hispanic/Latino clients. This can be explained by the growing numbers of this population in the United States[14], which has led to an explicit concern for the provision of counselling services to this ethnic group (Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994; Biever, et al., 2002; Biever, Gómez, González, & Patrizio, 2011; Santiago-Rivera, 1995; Valdez, 2000).

Following the professions' concern with improving mental health services for the Spanish-speaking US population and the consequent requirement for more bilingual therapists (Biever, et al., 2002), Castaño, Biever, González, and Anderson (2007) investigated bilingual therapists' experiences of practising in their clients' mother tongue and the associated training needs that therapists identify when practising across languages. Their sample consisted of one hundred and twenty-seven experienced professionals, most of whom self-reported as fluent in Spanish and

[14] The US Census Bureau (2010) estimates that the number of Latinos residing in the US exceeds 50 million and that 12.9% of the overall US population speak only Spanish in their home environment.

English. Participants completed a twelve-item Likert-style questionnaire examining participants' level of concerns about their use of language in terms of vocabulary, grammar and conversational fluency. In spite of participants' linguistic proficiency, more than half of the sample reported at least some concerns about use of vocabulary and translating technical or professional language in therapeutic work. The study emphasised the complexity of 'transferring' theory and knowledge from one linguistic context (training in English) to another (practising in Spanish), mirroring the researchers' intention to provide bilingual training to counsellors. Overall, findings elucidate a significant point, namely *the context-dependency of language use*. This element, alongside the previous debate on the complexity of emotional expression in a second-language, raises discussion on bilingual therapists' aptitude to explore clients' emotional worlds and reflect back those emotions in a second language. It would be interesting to see how bilingual therapists deal with these issues in intercultural/interlinguistic practice but this is not addressed in this study. To conclude, although findings present a general idea of the challenges that bilingual therapists may encounter when practising in a second language, the use of a pre-constructed measuring instrument to attain those, fails to give the opportunity for participants to express subjective experiences and concerns of interlinguistic practice.

To that end, Verdinelli and Biever (2009) followed up Castaño et al.'s (2007) study with a qualitative research design. The aim of the new study was to explore Spanish-English bilingual therapists' 'personal and professional language development and use' (2009, p. 231) rather than their experiences of interlinguistic practice. Still, this research does offer some insight into a bilingual therapist's experience of practising across languages. Verdinelli and Biever (2009) recruited from Castaño et al's (2007) sample, selecting therapists who had at least two years of experience, reported being fluent in Spanish and had few or no concerns about linguistic competence. This sample consisted of thirteen US-based participants, five of whom were native Spanish speakers (born and raised in Spanish-speaking countries, more comfortable speaking in Spanish) and eight heritage Spanish speakers (from hispanic background, raised in the US, more comfortable speaking in English). Interview themes and

consequently findings covered three themes: participants' linguistic backgrounds, their professional use of languages and aspects of therapeutic process. As the first theme is not related to therapeutic practice, it is not discussed here. With regards to professional use of language, bilingual therapists discussed the limitations of receiving training and supervision only in English and pointed out the necessity for more specific training. In relation to practice-related experiences of bilingual therapists, all participants reported being conscious of language limitations during therapy in their 'second' language: native Spanish speakers disclosed anxiety related to clients' potential reactions to their language use (e.g. accent) and preoccupation with self-expression in English, which often resulted in feeling distracted during therapy. Similarly, Heritage Spanish speakers shared a constant awareness of their use of Spanish that often results in misunderstandings and interruptions to the pace of therapy. Heritage speakers mentioned also difficulties with diverse clients' different use of Spanish (intonation, accent, speed, colloquialisms etc). This illuminates again the context-dependent character of language discussed earlier, yet pinpoints a different aspect: a language is not a sum of grammar rules and vocabulary but a dynamic entity that reflects specific cultural elements and groups. Applied to the case of the English language, this raises the issue of 'nativeness/non-nativeness' discussed at the beginning of this chapter, shedding light on the socio-cultural nature of language.

Undeniably, this study's findings provide a valuable insight into what it is like to conduct therapy in a second language. Nonetheless, the specific inclusion criteria of participants (at least two years of practising experience, residence in the US, linguistic fluency and no concerns about linguistic competence) do not elucidate intercultural practice experiences of therapists who may be less experienced, proficient, confident and less familiar with the cultural context in which they practise. This group includes international counselling trainees, underlining the significance of conducting research on this population.

The exclusive focus of Verdinelli and Biever's (2009) and Castaño et al's (2007) study on Hispanic/Latinos reflects the current needs of the American population and the profession's concerns from that standpoint, an element that also underpins the

work of other scholars (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998; Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994; Biever, et al., 2002; Biever, et al., 2011; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2009). Kissil, Davey and Davey (2012) and Barreto's (2013) work, although based in the US, are exceptions to this.

Kissil, Davey and Davey (2012) conducted a large-scale study recruiting US-based therapists from more than sixty different countries and forty-four diverse linguistic backgrounds. The project's concern with examining how being 'not from here' (2009, p. 2) influences therapists' self-perceptions as practitioners and their encounters with American clients reveals their interest in bilingual therapists' experiences of intercultural/interlinguistic practice, making it very relevant to my area of interest. Following a quantitative design, Kissil, Davey and Davey (2012) set out to evaluate the connection between immigrant therapists' acculturation level, language proficiency and counselling self-efficacy. Participants, who consisted of two hundred and fifty-eight foreign therapists (two hundred and thirteen of whom were non-native English-speakers) practising in the US, completed an online survey entailing two self-report measures: the first (Acculturation) assessed foreigners' a) perceived prejudice (e.g. stereotypes, discrimination) b) acculturation (e.g. preferences for friends and group identity) and c) language use (e.g. competence in English), while the second (Counselling Self-Efficacy) measured therapists' perceptions of a) performing counselling skills b) handling session tasks and c) negotiating challenging situations in their clinical work.

The most salient finding of this research reveals that counselling self-efficacy is not related to the general Acculturation scale as expected (therapists' feelings of connection to the US), but specifically to one sub-category of this scale, namely, perceived prejudice. As Kissil et al. (2012) argue, this suggests that participants who experience discrimination (stereotypes, prejudice and social isolation in the host culture) tend to feel less competent in practice. This is a particularly interesting finding that elucidates the intersubjective character of intercultural experience and the significance of others in the formation of a professional identity. This is in line with findings from studies on international counselling trainees presented earlier that identify the importance of others' (clients, peers, supervisors, trainers) responses and

feedback in formulating trainees' experiences both in general (e.g. Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003) and of international students in particular (e.g. Mittal & Wieling, 2006).

With regard to language use, Kissil at al's (2012) study reports a statistically significant correlation (but relatively low scores) between counselling self-efficacy and perceived language proficiency. This means that bilinguals who feel relatively fluent in English tend to perceive themselves as competent in counselling practice. Like Verdinelli and Biever's (2009) project, this finding implies that less fluent therapists may struggle with feelings of incompetence when practising across languages, stressing once more the usefulness of attending to the perspective of less proficient speakers, such as therapists who recently moved to a new country and international trainees, the focus of the present study.

A year later Kissil, Niño and Davey (2013) published another paper on the same topic, namely the experience of being an immigrant therapist. This work does not present empirical research material. Based on a review of the relevant literature and the use of some vignettes, Kissil et al. (2013) reveal two characteristics of immigrant therapists' experiences of intercultural practice: the development of meta-perspective, i.e. the ability to look at cultures from an external standpoint and be aware of their impact, and the experience of being an outsider, which 'is more prominent for individuals who do not speak English as their first language' (2013, p. 140), look different or come from 'markedly different' cultures. The authors suggest that 'speaking a primary language that is different from English adds another level of complexity to the feeling of otherness' (2013, p. 142), illuminating an interesting link between language and counselling practice. This work points to the central role that 'overt' or 'tangible' difference may play in a foreigner's experience of living and practising abroad. On one hand, this points out the necessity to investigate the experience of this group of foreign practitioners and find ways to support them. At the same time however, it highlights the fact that foreigners who may not have a tangible difference, may also feel like outsiders and should also be included in these investigations.

Finally, Baretto (2013) conducted a small scale qualitative study to explore immigrant therapists' experiences of moving to the US and renegotiating their professional identity in a new environment, as well as the interrelated struggles of this phenomenon. In spite of the diverse focus of the project in relation to my study, a part of its findings offers insight into the experience of practising across languages and cultures and is therefore pertinent to this review. Baretto (2013) collected data (face-to-face interviews and written accounts) from eight foreign-born, non-native speaking therapists who had accumulated some clinical experience in their home countries and then relocated to the US. Findings reveal that immigrant therapists encounter a number of struggles related to acculturation and gaining credentials for practice. With regard to intercultural practice, this study brings to the spotlight interesting details. First of all, it emphasises the difficulty of developing intercultural competence and practising in a second language, pointing out that:

> the emigrant therapist was continuously challenged to communicate emotions, feelings and thoughts assertively and to respond in a culturally appropriate way while counseling clients
>
> (Barreto, 2013, p. 347)

The above makes obvious a link between the literature presented earlier on bilingual immigrants and bilingual clients, and justified its inclusion in this chapter. Apart from foreignness-related difficulties and the fact that 'the limitations of a nonnative speaker was constant' (2013, p. 351), Barreto's study highlights that immigrant therapists may gain a self-awareness of their own differences through the intercultural experience. This entails challenges but also benefits in relation to not taking things for granted, exercising genuine curiosity, holding back preconceptions, listening attentively, being open to the new, respecting difference and gaining an understanding of life in different contexts. Also, it points out that being foreign promotes in the therapist the development of a stance of 'not knowing', facilitating both her own development but also reducing the power inequalities present in the therapeutic encounter, a position also put forward by Kitron (1992), as discussed earlier. More benefits of the intercultural encounter include creating an opportunity for the client to become more committed and take responsibility for preventing miscommunication, a stance that also advances their own self-awareness. The

qualitative, idiographic design of this study provides insight into the experience of intercultural/interlinguistic practice. Although it sets out to explore immigrant therapists' *struggles*, findings are particularly benefit-oriented, at least in relation to counselling practice. The fact that 'language limitations neither jeopardized the therapeutic relationship nor did they prevent the immigrant therapist from being therapeutically effective' (Barreto, 2013, p. 354) is particularly encouraging and consistent with Jiménez' (2004) positive experience of practice.

Up to this point, I have only discussed US-based research, a fact that signifies the absence of alternative perspectives in the relevant literature. Research offering insight into the British perspective comes from Beverley Costa, the founder of Mothertongue, a UK-based multi-ethnic counselling agency. Costa's (2010) project addresses a very particular therapeutic situation, i.e. the bilingual therapist - bilingual client dyad communicating in a lingua franca. While the study is particularly interesting as it portrays British therapists' experiences of intercultural practice, in terms of methodology it is unclear how the author analysed her data and generated themes, thus limiting the validity of the project. In all fairness, Costa identifies this limitation, and describes her work as a 'small scale informal piece of research' (2010, p. 19).

Costa (2010) distributed a short, open-questions-questionnaire to six bilingual therapists and then engaged in discussion with them about their experience of being non-native speakers, offering counselling in a lingua franca and their perception of the impact of this process on therapeutic work. Participants pointed out several beneficial aspects of their non-nativeness for therapeutic process, clients and themselves. For example, bilingual therapists identified a shared understanding with their clients of the experience of living abroad and not being able to communicate in their mother tongue; an enhanced sensitivity in language use, which often facilitated clients' related difficulties and the creation of a bond; interacting in a less proficient or academic way in a second language and therefore not representing the dominant cultural group for their foreign clients. This was identified as an element of potential equalization of power asymmetries, a finding that corroborates Kitron's (1992) experience presented earlier. Apart from these findings that are more outcome-

oriented, participants also identified advantages for themselves, such as learning to tolerate anxiety and embarrassment associated with language and misunderstandings through intercultural encounters. These very limited self-oriented findings are the closest information on subjective experience of intercultural practice that my literature review identified in the British context. It is interesting that this study reveals a particularly positive experience of practising in a lingua franca. This could be a result of the research aim to explore 'what might be learned from the experience of living with more than one language' (Costa, 2010, p. 15) and apply this to the interlinguistic counselling interaction.

In 2012 Costa collaborated with a UK-based professor of applied linguistics, Jean-Marc Dewaele, whose work on bilingualism and emotional expression was presented earlier in relation to bilingual clients and conducted a mixed-methods comparative study of mono- and bilingual therapists' beliefs, attitudes and practices with bilingual clients (Costa & Dewaele, 2012). One hundred and one participants (eighty-three multilingual and eighteen monolingual) from twenty different nationalities completed a Likert-style questionnaire investigating 'linguistic practices with multilingual clients, perceptions and attitudes towards mono- and multilingual interactions, multilingualism and multiculturalism' (2012, p.24). Results show significant variation in one out of the four dimensions of the questionnaire, namely 'Attunement versus Collusion', with bilingual therapists scoring higher towards the attunement pole compared to the monolingual ones. Based on the quantitative findings that reflected variance, the researchers conducted interviews with two multilingual and one monolingual therapists, to 'enrich their data'. Qualitative investigation indicates bilingual therapists' enhanced capacity to attune to their clients, while however being cautious in avoiding collusion. The monolingual therapist on the other hand, appeared more suspicious about assumptions that may be generated via a shared language and background. With regards to this, the issue of complexity of disclosing the therapist's own background was highlighted, an issue that had been pointed out also by Clauss (1998). Lastly, the study highlights the two bilingual therapists' difficulty in working in a language other than the one in which

they trained, replicating Castaño et al.'s (2007) emphasis on the transferability of theory and interventions across languages.

Overall, Costa and Dewaele's (2012) project was specifically designed to detect differences in mono/bilingual therapists' experiences and practices. This is reflected in the research design and presentation of findings, which do not emphasise what it may be like to practise in a second language but what differences there may be between mono and bilingual therapists. The qualitative aspect of their study facilitates the reader's understanding of intercultural practice as a phenomenon and contributes to this literature.

The final piece of scholarly work discussed in this literature review is a trainee's personal exploration of her experience of working in a second language, as presented at an international conference (Kariotaki, 2013). It is worth noting that Kariotaki is not the only trainee exploring her experience of being a foreign and non-native-speaking practitioner. Christodoulidi (2010) also conducted a similar piece of research but as access to her work is restricted, this thesis cannot benefit from it.

Kariotaki's (2013) work is based on her attempt to better understand her linguistic identity and reflect on its impact on her therapeutic practice. Using an Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) approach, Kariotaki (2013) listened carefully to five audio taped sessions with one British, male, client and noted down her reflections of this encounter. She then analysed her reflections using thematic analysis, having however identified some initial themes from her literature review. Her analysis points to the centrality of second-language use in her experience and its impact on her understanding of the therapeutic process. One of the identified themes, namely 'wrong use of English language' discusses making mistakes in terms of pronunciation and grammar, having an accented speech and translating expressions from other contexts that do not necessarily fit the therapeutic encounter. In relation to this, she states:

> My biggest fear being a bilingual therapist is that due to my linguistic inadequacy, I may not be able to understand fully what my client says and therefore not be able to help him/her to their therapeutic process
>
> (Kariotaki, 2013, p. 978)

Kariotaki is explicitly concerned with the potential impact of her language use on the client's therapeutic process and outcome. Nonetheless, her account does not address the impact that this has on herself and her own process of being a non-native speaking trainee. This tendency is present in the other two themes identified in her data. For example in the theme 'trying to be understood' she discloses that in an attempt to interact with the client, she uses 'big', 'messy' and 'tiring' sentences that have 'an impact on my skills as a therapist and the establishment of the therapeutic relationship' (2013, p. 978). She reflects that these sentences may be taking up the client's time to process and discuss their material, putting her in a more powerful position than her client and therefore impeding the therapeutic relationship. Although her reflections are insightful in terms of practice, unfortunately they do not mirror her inner state in relation to her foreignness and non-nativeness, elements that would have been interesting to explore. Also, perhaps due to the context in which her work was presented, Kariotaki does not link her experience to the existing literature on other foreign trainees' experiences of practice. Nonetheless, given the scarcity of the relevant literature, this case study offers a valuable insight into the experience of practising in a second language and culture as a trainee in the UK.

2.4.4 Summary of section

In this section I have introduced the phenomenon of bilingualism through immigrants' accounts and reviewed the experience of second language use in the therapeutic context from the perspectives of bilingual clients and therapists. While client-based literature points to the significance of second language use and its impact on emotional processing and expression as well as self-identity, therapists' accounts focus mainly on therapeutic outcome and process, only tackling subjective experiences such as bilingual therapists' concerns with language use and context-dependency of language. If, however, second language use impacts on bilingual individuals' self and emotional processing and expression as the literature suggests,

the need to investigate bilingual therapists' experiences of negotiating emotional topics and issues of identity when they practise in a second language and culture becomes obvious. To conclude, this review reveals the absence of literature on bilingual therapists' experiences of intercultural and interlinguistic practice and highlights the lack of research on individuals who are fairly inexperienced and unfamiliar with the linguistic and cultural context they are required to practise in.

2.5 Conclusions

In this section I put forward a general conclusion that can be drawn from the review of the two bodies of literature that inform this thesis, namely, **(intercultural) counselling and (multicultural) counselling training**, and **bilingualism and psychotherapy**.

A therapist's journey through professional development includes various phases. One of the most emotionally demanding phases occurs during training and the beginning of client practice. As a result of globalisation, counsellor education is becoming increasingly multicultural. Part of the counselling population consists of foreign counselling trainees who appear to encounter a number of difficulties in relation to their practice, with linguistic and cultural diversity being central. Linguistic diversity and bilingualism, however, can impact significantly on the individual's sense of self, as well as their emotional processing and expression, making this phenomenon pertinent to counselling practice, which involves the therapist's use of self (Wosket, 2010) and requires high levels of self- and cultural-awareness (Lago, 2011).

The need for deeper explorations of the phenomenon of intercultural/interlinguistic practice becomes explicit. In particular, as a result of reviewing the relevant literature, there is a need for research that will:

- Focus on foreign counselling trainees' experiences of beginning clinical practice
- Look into subjective experiences inclusively, without focusing on particular features (e.g. challenges or therapeutic outcome)

- Explore this under-researched phenomenon in an in-depth, idiographic manner that will illuminate it
- Provide insight into contexts with a strong tradition in counselling training, other than the US
- Focus on language as an aspect of cultural difference
- Understand language from a wider perspective and take into consideration various socio-cultural features rather than purely linguistic ones.

The need to address these shortcomings of the literature refine the general research idea presented earlier (beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice), into specific research questions. These will be outlined in the final section of this chapter.

2.6 Research Questions

Based on the literature review I conducted and the gaps I identified, as well as my ontological and epistemological stance (discussed in chapter three), this project's main research question is formulated as follows:

What are foreign counselling trainees' distinctive experiences of working in a second language and culture?

To better address this question, I have broken it down into three sub-questions, which explore respectively, the 'phenomenon' of intercultural practice (what takes place when individuals practise interculturally), how people make sense of this phenomenon, and how they negotiate it. Specifically, I have identified the following research questions:

- **What happens in beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice?**
- **How do novice foreign trainees make sense of these experiences?**
- **How do they negotiate intercultural/interlinguistic practice?**

As Larkin and Thomson (2012) point out, these are 'first-tier' hermeneutic-phenomenological questions that focus on experiences of particular people in particular contexts.

The previously identified literature gaps led to the formulation of a fourth interrelated question that would explore the impact of foreignness or non-nativeness on the self and practice:

How does linguistic and/or cultural difference influence individuals' experiences of 'foreignness' within a counselling professional role?

This question would examine the intersecting factors of professional and cultural identities in a counselling context, and explore how these are shaped by linguistic and/or cultural difference. Following Larkin and Thomson's (2012) suggestion, this is a second-tier type of question, aiming to engage with theory and build dialogue.

These specific research questions, as formed by the gaps in the relevant literature and the requirements for further research, also denote the nature of investigation, that is, the study's positioning in relation to research paradigms and theories of knowledge. Clarification of this thesis' theoretical underpinnings and methodological approach takes place in the following chapter.

2.7 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I have presented the literature review that informs this thesis; this consists of two main bodies of literature, namely, **(intercultural) counselling and (multicultural) counselling training**, and **bilingualism and psychotherapy.** In order to be consistent, but also transparent, in relation to the use of key terms that derive from other scholarly areas in this thesis, I have also incorporated a section of **clarification of terms** prior to reviewing the relevant literature. I concluded this chapter by presenting this project's specific research questions.

In the following chapter I present this thesis' ontological and epistemological positions, as well as this thesis' methodological approach.

Chapter 3: Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

After narrowing down the phenomenon I wish to investigate and refining this thesis' research questions based on the gaps identified in the literature, in this chapter I discuss this project's theoretical underpinnings, that is, its ontological and epistemological positions, as well as the methodological approach it draws upon. I open this chapter with an explanation of the terms ontology and epistemology; I then move on to the presentation of the specific ontological and epistemological stances that this thesis espouses, as well as the key theorists and concepts that inform these. Next, I move on to explain this thesis' methodology. First, I argue in favour of qualitative methods as the most appropriate research paradigm for this investigation; I then make the case for hermeneutic-phenomenology as the general methodological approach and for Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the particular research method to conduct this study.

3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

Defining a project's theoretical framework is one of the basic elements of any research process (Crotty, 1998) and an essential aspect of an effective and clear research design (Mason, 2002). At the heart of a project's theoretical framework lie the researcher's ontological and epistemological stances. Prior to the presentation of my specific positions, I briefly explain what these terms mean and the main views they encompass.

3.2.1 Clarification of Terms

A researcher's ontological perspective can be described as the way they perceive social reality, their ideas of the 'very nature and essence of things in the social world' (Mason, 2002, p.14). A general consensus exists regarding the two main diametrical

ontological positions: people either recognise the existence of one, fixed, independent reality, or take the stance that reality does not exist 'out there' but is a socially constructed and context-dependent concept (Barbour, 2008; Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2004; Crotty, 1998). Different terms refer broadly to these two positions: the first stance is often described as 'objectivism' (Bryman, 2004; Crotty, 1998) or 'realism' (Blaikie, 2007, 2010; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999), while the latter as 'relativism' (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999; Harper, 2012), 'idealism' (Blaikie, 2007; 2010, Gergen, 1999), 'interpretivism' (Shaw, 2010) or 'constructionism' (Bryman, 2004).

Epistemology refers to what can be known in relation to a person's entities of social reality (Blaikie, 2010; Mason, 2002) or what 'counts' as knowledge in a discipline (Bryman, 2004). Put simply, epistemology refers to 'how we know what we know' (Crotty, 1998, p.8). Similarly to ontology, epistemology entails two conflicting positions. On one side there is the belief that legitimate knowledge about reality can be obtained through objective investigation and explanation of phenomena. On the other, stands the belief that the only way of gaining knowledge is through subjective understanding and interpretations (Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2004; Barbour, 2008; Crotty, 1998). Again, a range of terms in the relevant literature refers to these two concepts: 'positivism' (Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2004), 'empiricism' (Blaikie, 2007; Gergen, 2009) and 'realism' (Harper, 2012; note that realism has been presented as an ontological position earlier) often describe the first. On the other side, 'interpretivism' (Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2004; note that interpretivism has been also used as an ontological stance by Shaw, 2010), 'constructionism' (Blaikie, 2007; also a term for ontology) and 'social constructionism' (Harper, 2012) are often used to refer to the latter stance.

A closer look at these terms would unveil further internal heterogeneity, even though authors often use them interchangeably. There is considerable diversity in the categorisation of the various positions that people take in relation to these major stances, and some of the above-mentioned terms represent different subcategories within a wider approach. Authors assert however, that these categorisations are not universal and have only been developed to facilitate researchers to position their

work (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998). Following this, instead of reviewing the different sub-categories that can be found in the literature and the different uses of the respective terms, I find it more useful to offer a thorough presentation of my personal ontological and epistemological stance and point out any discrepancies related to the terms I use to describe my positions.

My ontological and epistemological positions, which guided the formation of specific research questions (presented in chapter two), were shaped by and developed through the interplay of various philosophical concepts and theories. Broadly speaking, this thesis' focus on foreign trainees' experiences of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice reveals a 'phenomenological' stance (interest in experience), while my conviction that the only way of accessing those is through interpretation, divulges a 'hermeneutic' stance. Phenomenology, hermeneutics and the field of investigation where they interweave, hermeneutic phenomenology, are vast and internally diverse philosophical (and methodological) areas. For this reason, I prefer to position this project within a loosely termed hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition (Baert & Rubio, 2009; Blaikie, 2007; Delanty, 2005; Giddens, 2006; Goss & Mearns, 1997; Schwandt, 2000) and clarify the specific positions of this tradition that I endorse, like Finlay (2009) proposes. In the rest of the chapter I present the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin this thesis, and the interrelated philosophical concepts that inform them.

3.2.2 Ontology

With regards to ontology, I endorse a relativist or idealist stance of rejecting the possibility of one fixed, independent reality and acknowledge a context-dependent, subjectively perceived 'reality'. Relativism or idealism is an overarching ontological position; when applied to this specific thesis, my ontological perspective can be narrowed down to subjective experience. This means that the very essence of the phenomenon I wish to investigate (beginning intercultural practice) cannot be universal; it is subjective and derives from experience. This is related to the study's location within the field of counselling and psychotherapy, a 'people profession' (Carr, Bondi, Clark, & Clegg, 2011), and its commitment to human experience and

intersubjectivity. I take the stance that experience is not situated outwith the individual, but occupies a position within them. To that end, there is no 'real', external experience of practising interculturally, but individual, subjective experiences of particular individuals in specific contexts (which are, however, *experienced as* 'real'). If experience is subjective, it follows that it is also context and time-dependent. Therefore the nature of the 'thing that really exists', my ontological position, is subjective experience. If this were not the case, I would need to acknowledge the existence of an independent experience existing outside the individual's particular context –a position that I disagree with.

To illuminate this ontological position, I will use 'Sally', a fictitious foreign trainee who hypothetically practises interculturally: if Sally did not exist, there would be no 'Sally's experience' to explore. If no foreign trainees existed, there would be no phenomenon of intercultural practice to investigate. But since Sally exists, then her experience of practice also exists and is experienced by her as real.

That said, in order to be able to justify the phenomenological character of this project, I need also to take some distance from the extreme, at times nihilistic, stance that idealism or relativism may contain, where lived experience is purely by linguistic constructions influenced by historically-dependent discourses. While, as suggested in chapter one, I agree with the notion that language influences the way we experience things, to my mind, experience is not only language, it is *shaped* by it. This differentiation allows a shift of focus from discussing *whether things exist* beyond language to examining *how individuals experience* phenomena, a position closer to the phenomenological nature of this work.

Before I move on to my epistemological stance, I discuss the theoretical concept that has greatly shaped my ontological position, namely Heidegger's Dasein. To better understand this concept, we need to contextualise Heidegger's work in the wider phenomenological tradition.

Phenomenology is the philosophical strand that is concerned with the exploration and description of human experience (Finlay, 2009; Moran, 2000). Husserl is considered

to be the father of phenomenology with his famous suggestion to go 'to the things themselves' –the 'things' being lived experience (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). Husserl's 'transcendental' (or descriptive) phenomenology represents an initial attempt to reach individuals' experiences as he 'sought to establish the everyday experienced human world as our scientific foundation' (Finlay, 2011, p. 44). The way to achieve that, for Husserl, was by 'bracketing out' the researcher's existing pre-assumptions:

> this universal depriving of acceptance, this "inhibiting" or "putting out of play" of all positions taken towards the already-given Objective world (...) this "phenomenological epoché" and "parenthesizing" of the Objective world – therefore does not leave us confronting nothing. On the contrary we gain possession of something by it
>
> (Husserl, 1960, p. 20)

For Husserl the phenomenon was to be isolated and inspected 'out of the world where it occurs' (Denzin, 2002, p. 355). His principle that someone can step outside their context and 'bracket out' pre-assumptions was criticised and is considered to be the element that created a schism in the phenomenological tradition. One of the leading figures in the opposing strand was one of Husserl's students, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's theory turned the study of phenomena from an attempt for objective description, to an interpretative process (McConnell-Henry, et al., 2009) giving to phenomenology its hermeneutic character.

Heidegger (1962) perceived human existence as subjective and inextricably linked to the world we live in. His concept of Dasein, translated in English as Being-in-the-world, summarises this exact position:

> Dasein's Being finds its meaning in temporality. But temporality is also the condition which makes historicality possible as a temporal kind of Being which Dasein possesses, regardless of whether or how, Dasein is an entity 'in time'
>
> (Heidegger, 1962, p. 41)

So for Heidegger, people are embedded in the context they live in; their existence is always time and context-dependent (Finlay, 2009, 2011; McConnell-Henry, et al., 2009; Moran, 2000; Shinebourne, 2011). In addition, 'the world of Dasein is a with-

world. Being is being with others' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 155). This entails an element of intersubjectivity, which will be discussed further in the next section on epistemology. Since we are all 'in-the-world', Heidegger (1962) argues, trying to traverse our context and 'bracket out' pre-assumptions in order to understand 'things' is futile. Instead, he suggests, we should make use of our 'natural attitude', i.e. our context, and make this the focus of inquiry (McLeod, 2011). So in contrast to Husserl, Heidegger did not see pre-assumptions as 'obstacles' to knowledge but as what allows understanding: 'In every case this interpretation is grounded in *something we have in advance* – in a *fore-having'* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191). Since interpretations are already contextualised in our experience, the aim of any investigation would not be to try and bracket those off, but to be aware of them, to 'make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 195).

It is not difficult to point out the commonalities between the ontological position that I have described earlier and Heidegger's concept of Dasein. Heidegger's criticism of the usefulness and even feasibility of stepping outside one's context has greatly influenced my endorsement of an idealist or relativist ontological stance of rejecting the existence of an external, independent reality. Similarly, his understanding of experience as context-dependent has facilitated the refinement of my ontological stance in identifying subjective experience as the most fundamental entity of the social world. A final clarification is required: basing my idealist ontological position on Heidegger's Dasein, does not mean that Heidegger himself took on an idealistic ontological stance. Heidegger acknowledged the existence of an external reality, which, he suggested, is perceived subjectively:

> the entity as an entity is 'in itself' and independent of any apprehension of it; yet, the being of the entity is found only in encounter and can be explained, made understandable, only from the phenomenal exhibition and interpretation of the structure of the encounter
>
> (Heidegger, 1985, p. 217)

While for Heidegger the person is inextricably linked to a world that *exists independently* (but cannot be accessed independently), for me the person is

inextricably linked to a world that *exists within the person*, but is *perceived as real.* Having clarified this, I now move on to this thesis' epistemological position.

3.2.3 Epistemology

With regards to 'how I can know' about subjective experience (my epistemology) I endorse an interpretivist position. Again, terminology needs to be handled with caution and a distinction needs to be made prior to any explanations. The term interpretivism does not always refer to the position I endorse and is sometimes associated with the 'bracketing out' position put forward by Husserlian phenomenology. For example Schwandt (2000), in his discussion of three epistemological stances, points out that interpretivists set out to access someone else's experience, by 'breaking out' of their context, a position that I contest. To my mind, understanding always derives from within a person's context, and is based on interpretations. If, as explained, experience is subjective and exists within a person, I can never access others' experiences and understand them objectively, or in the exact same way as they do. Any knowledge I can acquire will always be a product of my interpretation. But if I do not have access to others' experiences, upon what do I base my interpretations? The answer is on whatever people *tell me about* their experiences. So to my mind, the way to explore an experiential phenomenon is through people's accounts of their experiences. In this thesis, if the nature of social reality is subjective experience of beginning intercultural practice (ontology), the epistemological position it takes on acknowledges that understanding of this phenomenon is possible through accessing accounts of people who have that experience. This will be elaborated in chapter four, where I discuss the specific methods I follow to generate data.

As explained earlier, experiences are subjective and context-dependent and therefore people's sense-making of their experiences is already interpreted. So when I endeavour to interpret someone else's experience, I am functioning at a second level of interpretation: I re-interpret others' interpreted experiences. At the same time, apart from my interpretation, an individual's 'narration' of her accounts (either direct or indirect) takes place in a specific context, in which other people (and me) also

participate. So ultimately in my investigation of beginning intercultural counselling practice, what I have access to are the (interpreted) accounts of people who have that experience, as these are *reconstructed in an intersubjective context*. The concept of reconstructing or co-constructing experiences moves slightly beyond epistemology to the realm of methodology and will be explored further in the following section.

To conclude with my epistemological stance I need to mention that in order for me to make sense of others' interpretations, I need to interpret that information by *using my own context*. In order to be able to do that I need to have an understanding of my context, that is, of my cultural and historical background, thoughts, biases and pre-assumptions. Only by having an understanding of what my perspective is, can I attempt to understand others' worlds and interpret them in a way that is close to their experience. As I cannot step outside my context and observe it objectively though, I need to be self-aware, attend to my thoughts and practices and be transparent about what informs my interpretations. For this reason, I initiated this thesis with disclosing some information related to my motivation for this work and background. Reflexivity holds a central role also in the way I conduct this study and will be discussed further in chapter four, where I present this thesis' research methods.

Having said that, I need to point out that none of the above-mentioned practices guarantees mutual understanding and successful communication. Making sense of one's own experience and communicating it to another person is a complex process that entails the use of a 'common' language that can be understood by the other person. As explained in the beginning of the literature review chapter, the concept of 'nativeness' is complex, with identical language use being problematic even among people who share a linguistic background. As the focus of this thesis is different, a pragmatic view is adopted, where a level of certain common understanding can be achieved through the use of a commonly accepted language. This understanding, however, involves active effort, may entail misinterpretations and lead to miscommunication. To address these, I take the stance of engaging in a direct interpersonal communicative task, where meanings can be negotiated and understanding can be immediately checked. This position is associated with my

methodological choice of one-to-one interviews to access participants' accounts and will be addressed in the next chapter.

I conclude the explication of this thesis' epistemological stance by referring again to Sally, the fictitious trainee used earlier, to illustrate my point further: the only way to access Sally's experience of intercultural practice is through whatever she tells me about that experience (interpretivism). Her narrative however is already an interpretation, making my task to understand her experience a second-layer interpretation (double hermeneutic). For me to be able to understand Sally's experience of practising in the UK, which lies beyond my context, I need to be aware of what my context entails and make comparisons to my own experiences (reflexivity). Finally, this understanding is likely to entail misunderstandings, which Sally and I will negotiate in our face-to-face interaction (intersubjectivity).

Another philosophical concept that has influenced my epistemology is Gadamer's 'fusing horizons'. Gadamer's work is rooted in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology and emphasises language and dialogic interaction. This emphasis matches this project's concern with interpersonal communication (in intercultural counselling) and the concept functions as a link between my ontology, research focus and methodology, providing coherence to the overall research design.

Gadamer espoused Heidegger's ontological position of context-dependency of existence and focused on hermeneutics by stressing the idea of interpretations as the fundamental entity of understanding (Gadamer, 1976). As Blaikie put it, Gadamer perceived 'as reality the ever-changing world in which people are participants' (2010, p. 102). In terms of epistemology, Gadamer suggests that dialogue and interpretations are the only way to reach understanding. For him, 'All understanding is interpretation' (Gadamer, 2004, p. 390). This was elaborated through his concept on fusing horizons, a dialogic process where one's worldview is altered through interacting with another person (or text). The concept of 'horizon' was described as 'the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point' (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301). That said, it should not be seen as something

fixed that limits understanding, but an expandable 'space' that broadens through dialogic interaction (Vessey, 2009).

This interaction takes place through the shared tool of language. For Gadamer, just like for Heidegger, language and understanding are inseparable (Finlay, 2011). Language is the 'universal medium' (Gadamer, 2004), the tool through which the fusion of horizons and consequently understanding is possible:

> I have tried to present in *Truth and Method*, through the aspect of linguisticality that operates in all understanding, an unambiguous demonstration of the continual process of mediation by which that which is societally transmitted (the tradition) lives on. For language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive the world.
>
> (Gadamer, 1976, p. 29)

This extract demonstrates that tradition and culture also come into play. Like Heidegger, Gadamer also proposed that any interaction and the understanding that results from it, is 'biased' by one's tradition or cultural background (Maggs-Rapport, 2001). Although biased understanding is often followed by a negative connotation, for Gadamer (and Heidegger), tradition, context and biases are the necessary *conditions* to achieve sense making (Bielskis, 2008; Dostal, 2002; Dowling, 2007; Gadamer, 1976, 2004; Warnke, 1987). As Baert and Rubio (2009) put it, people cannot be outside their tradition; the context through which they view things is the exact standpoint that allows people to make sense of the world. For Gadamer, 'understanding includes a reflective dimension' (1976, p. 45); what allows a person to understand another's horizon is a process of knowing one's own context:

> This kind of sensitivity involves neither "neutrality" with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meaning.
>
> (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 271-272)

So for Gadamer, it is critical awareness of one's own historical prejudices that grounds our understanding. It now becomes clear that the concepts of reflexivity and

self-awareness that I described as part of my epistemological stance are present in Gadamer's work.

Overall, Gadamer's concept of 'fusion of horizons' and its emphasis on dialogue, interpretations and context have been extremely informative for my epistemology. What I also need to acknowledge however, is Giddens' (1982, 1984) (initial) concept of the 'double hermeneutic', which has shaped my understanding of re-interpreting participants' already interpreted experiences.

Giddens suggested that in opposition to natural scientists who study an 'object world that does not answer back, and which does not construct and interpret the meanings of its activities' (1982, p. 12), social scientists study a world which is 'constituted as meaningful' by individuals who 'produce and reproduce it in their activities' (1982, p.7). This is a first-level interpretation. Social sciences' investigation (and therefore interpretation) of people's first-level interpretations leads to a second layer of interpretation, or a 'double hermeneutic'. So, the subjects of social research have their own interpretations of social life (first level) and social scientists, based on their own interpretations, re-interpret their subjects' interpretations (double hermeneutic):

> The sociologist has a field of study phenomena which are already constituted as meaningful. The condition of 'entry' to this field is getting to know what actors already know
>
> (Giddens, 1984, p. 284)

Some years later, Giddens came to see the double hermeneutic as part of a broader 'condition of modernity' (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 33). Indeed, Giddens elaborated his concept of the double hermeneutic by emphasising 'the practical influence of sociology upon modern societies' and by pointing out that 'findings of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe' (1987, pp. 19-20). This elaborated position moves beyond this thesis' focus on subjectivity and intersubjectivity. I therefore distinguish between Giddens' earlier position (1982; 1984) and the later (1987) emphasis of his work, and draw upon his initial stance to support my epistemology. So the 'double hermeneutic' in my project consists of a first-level interpretation of participants' understanding of their experiences and

secondly, my own interpretation of their recounted experiences. It is worth noting that this way of thinking allows multiple levels of hermeneutics to take place, i.e. the reader's interpretations of my 'interpreted' findings.

3.2.4 Concluding note

In this section I have presented the ontological and epistemological positions of this thesis. I have also presented the main philosophical concepts that have influenced my positions, namely, Heidegger's Dasein, Gadamer's fusion of horizons and Giddens' double hermeneutic. Of course these theorists have developed concepts and traditions that extend beyond the influence of this thesis' theoretical framework and therefore exceed the scope of this section. Where a clarification was necessary theorists' other positions have been succinctly included (like in Giddens' case). It is perhaps obvious that this section reflects my own understanding of a segment of these philosophers' complex and often interpreted (in Heidegger's and Gadamer's cases) work.

To summarise, the theoretical framework of this phenomenological-interpretivist project recognises experience as subjective and takes the stance that any attempt to understand and present others' experiences will always be influenced by and possible through the researcher's own context.

Having clarified these positions, we can now proceed to this project's methodological approach.

3.3 Methodology: Matching Ontology, Epistemology and Research Aims

3.3.1 The Case for Qualitative Research

McLeod has suggested that 'the process of knowing involves employing a practical method that is derived from an epistemology, which is in turn grounded in an ontology' (2001b, p. 55). In this section I present the methodological approach I follow for this project and explicate the coherence between this and the ontological and epistemological positions presented earlier.

A project's methodological approach deals with the topic of how the researcher can 'go about finding out whatever she or he believes can be known' (McLeod, 2001, p.55). The ontological/epistemological 'paradigm war' (Goss & Mearns, 1997) or 'science war' (Flyvbjerg, 2001) discussed at the beginning of this chapter is also reflected in the two methodological traditions, namely the qualitative and quantitative approaches. While some scholars argue that each method is suitable for different research arenas with qualitative methods being appropriate in social science and quantitative in natural science research (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2001), others endorse a pluralistic view and acknowledge the potential value of both and/or their combination (e.g. Cooper & McLeod, 2011; Goss & Mearns, 1997). This debate will not be developed here, as this project is entirely embedded within the qualitative approach. Overall, I support the notion that each methodological approach uses different methods, serves different purposes and answers different questions, with quantitative methods being 'more generally concerned with counting occurrences, volumes or the size of associations between entities' (Smith, 2008, p. 1) and qualitative methods setting out to describe and understand these entities and 'explore the nature of what is going on' (Goss & Mearns, 1997, p. 190). Scholars agree consensually that qualitative research is appropriate to achieve the 'pursuit' of subjective experience (Barbour, 2008; Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2004; Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2010). This affirms qualitative methodology's coherence with this thesis' ontological and epistemological positions discussed earlier. Its interest in understanding social phenomena and capturing subjective experiences demonstrates also its pertinence to counselling and psychotherapy, a profession that is primarily concerned with human experience, and particularly to investigations of human interactions in this field, such as experiences of counselling practice. As McLeod argues:

> the social context within which therapy is practised means that there is a constant requirement to learn how best to apply these therapeutic factors in particular circumstances
>
> (McLeod, 2001a, p. 5)

Qualitative methodology, with its in-depth explorations of specific cases offers insight into these 'particular circumstances' and therefore is apposite for studying

foreign counselling trainees' subjective experiences of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice.

3.3.2 The Case for a Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Methodology

The qualitative approach encompasses different strategies for generating and analysing data (e.g. Grounded Theory, Discursive Approaches, Narrative Analysis, Phenomenology). The differences between these strategies are not only related to what they set out to explore but also to their theoretical underpinnings. As suggested earlier, for a robust research design, coherence between theoretical framework and the project's aims is required (Harper, 2012; Reicher, 2000).

Reicher distinguishes between discursive and experiential approaches that have diverse 'philosophical roots', 'theoretical assumptions' and 'ask different types of questions' (2000, p. 4). Discursive approaches (e.g. Discursive Psychology, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis) are concerned with how people construct meanings through language, following a (sometimes even radical) social constructionist epistemology where language *constitutes* 'reality' (Langdridge, 2004; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Willig, 2008). Applied to this thesis, a discursive approach would not endeavour to understand participants' experiences of intercultural practice but how meaning is constructed linguistically, how stories are narrated, constructed etc. This would not fit this project's aim to explore subjective experience, nor its interpretivist stance of viewing language as the tool through which (intersubjective) understanding is achieved.

Experiential approaches on the other hand are not concerned with how language constructs meaning but with individuals' lived experiences (Davidsen, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Grounded theory (GT) is 'perhaps the best known' experiential method (Reicher, 2000, p. 3), as it aims to produce a 'theoretical-level account' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 43) that explains phenomena by looking at detailed participants' accounts (McLeod, 2011; Willig, 2008). While it can be used from different epistemological frameworks (Harper, 2012) and would potentially match my interpretivist stance, grounded theory would fail to match this study for two

reasons: first, it would not be apposite to this thesis' concern with individuals' experiences, rather than explanations of phenomena. Secondly, its objective to generate theory, would not be apposite for an exploratory project like this one.

To be consistent with this project's research aim, i.e. the exploration of experience of intercultural practice, an experiential, phenomenological research strategy is required. To ensure coherence with the project's theoretical framework, this phenomenological strategy needs a hermeneutic lens. Therefore, the most appropriate research strategy for this project is a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. Further clarification is needed in relation to the different versions of hermeneutic-phenomenological methods that can be found in the relevant literature.

While there is an abundance of literature on hermeneutic phenomenology and its evolution as a philosophical tradition, there is considerably less work on how this is applied in research (but see Finlay & Evans, 2009; Moustakas, 1990; Smith, et al., 2009; Todres, 2007; van Manen, 1990). The absence of a collective classification of the diverse approaches, the (often) subtle differences between the different versions and the arbitrariness in the use of terms across disciplines impede this decision. Finlay's (2011) work, which reviews the different phenomenological methods for research in the field of therapy and provides a comprehensive and detailed directory of the different versions proposed by scholars, has proved to be invaluable in the process of narrowing down the methodological approach endorsed for this project.

3.3.3 The Case for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

In this final section I detail the particular foci and characteristics of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and explain why this is an appropriate research method for this project. That said, I prefer to position my work as a hermeneutic-phenomenological study, whose methodology *is informed by the principles of IPA*. This clarification gives me the freedom to adapt Smith et al.'s (2009) guidelines in an apposite way. This need will be elaborated in chapter four.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is a method introduced by British psychologist Jonathan Smith in the mid 1990s (Smith, 1996). While originally rooted

in health psychology, it quickly became a widely used qualitative method in several areas of social science (Smith, 2004). It has equally found broad recognition in the field of psychotherapy and counselling (e.g. Broadbent, 2013; Daw & Joseph, 2007; Fragkiadaki, Triliva, Balamoutsou, & Prokopiou, 2013; Glasman, Finlay, & Brock, 2004; Goddard, Murray, & Simpson, 2008; Golsworthy & Coyle, 2001; Harris, 2009; Lee & Prior, 2013; Macran, Stiles, & Smith, 1999), which supports the appropriateness of its use in this study.

IPA is a version of hermeneutic phenomenology (Finlay, 2011) and therefore part of a group of 'closely connected approaches which share a commitment to the exploration of personal lived experience, but which have different emphases or suggested techniques to engage in this project' (Smith, 2004, p. 41). For example 'lifeworld approaches' (Finlay, 2011), also found in the literature as 'existentialist-informed hermeneutic phenomenology' (Willig & Billin, 2012), are concerned with how everyday experience is embodied and lived through time and space and in relation to others, a focus that exceeds this project's interest in a very specific, time and context-bound experience. On the other hand, 'first-person' hermeneutic-phenomenological approaches emphasise the researcher's personal reflection in making sense of a phenomenon (Finlay, 2011). In this study, where the researcher does not have personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation, adopting a method that focuses on others' accounts is essential.

IPA is concerned with people's subjective experiences and with how people make sense of their experience (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Larkin & Thomson, 2012; Smith, 2004; Smith, et al., 2009), matching the nature of my research questions presented at the end of the previous chapter. If we unfold this statement, there are three elements to attend to: first, IPA is *phenomenological* in its interest in lived experience (Smith, 2004). As Larkin et al. put it, in IPA researchers 'strive to see the world' as participants view it (2006, p. 110). Following my ontological position, I believe in a subjective reality that is experienced as real by individuals. In this project, I endeavour to understand intercultural counselling practice as my participants experience and make sense of it. Secondly, IPA is *interpretative,* as it identifies the analysis of experience as an interpretative process (Smith, 2011b). In fact this is a

double hermeneutic process that involves a researcher attempting to understand a participant who is trying to make sense of their experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This is another position that I endorse and explained in detail in my epistemology section. Finally IPA is *idiographic*, that is, committed to the particular, both in terms of detail (and hence analysis) and in terms of focusing on particular cases (Larkin, et al., 2006). As Smith, Flowers and Larkin put it:

> IPA is committed to understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context
>
> (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29)

IPA's idiographic nature is, according to Finlay (2011), a distinguishing element among other hermeneutic phenomenological methods. Indeed, its interest in particular experiences of particular individuals is the aspect that makes the method very suitable for this study, which is concerned with a particular phenomenon (beginning intercultural/interlinguistic counselling practice), exploring it from the perspective of a specific group of people (international trainees). Commitment to idiography is aligned with what Flyvbjerg (2001), using Aristotle's terminology, describes as part of doing 'phronetic' research, that is, research that contributes to and is based on *practical wisdom*. Learning from particular cases is central in this process, as they advance practice-related expertise by providing insights. As suggested earlier, this is very pertinent to a 'people profession' such as counselling and psychotherapy, both in relation to training and practice (Carr, et al., 2011). I will come back to this point in chapter seven, when I discuss this project's limitations.

IPA is not only coherent with this thesis' aims, but also with its theoretical framework. With regards to the philosophical underpinnings of the method, IPA draws upon the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Gadamer and Ricoeur and acknowledges the double hermeneutic and the researcher's central role in any attempt to understand individual experience (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Finlay, 2011; Larkin & Thomson, 2012; Larkin, et al., 2006; Shinebourne, 2011; Smith, et al., 2009). Different IPA researchers use the work of these theorists in various ways and position themselves diversely on the ontological and epistemological continua.

As Harper (2012) points out, while many methods are distinguished by their philosophical underpinnings, the same method can be used from different perspectives and for this reason, it is essential that researchers refine and are transparent about their theoretical framework. I have done this work in detail at the beginning of this chapter. As a conclusion, I use Smith et al.'s (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) from an idealist ontological perspective (which, however, values subjective experience as 'real') and adopt an interpretative, self-reflexive stance in relation to understanding.

3.4 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I presented this thesis' ontological and epistemological positions and discussed how these have then led to the endorsement of a specific methodological approach. Alongside this, I have also presented the philosophical concepts that have informed and shaped these positions. Admittedly, this process has not occurred in the linear, clear way that has been presented here. Developing and refining my ontology and epistemology has been a long, complex and often frustrating process given the abundance of literature but also its incoherence in use of terms. Reviewing diverse methodological approaches has facilitated this process and led to an overall coherence between theoretical underpinnings and as we will see next, methods. Finally, in this chapter I argued in favour of IPA as an appropriate research method for this study. In the next chapter I introduce Smith et al.'s (2009) guidelines for conducting research from an IPA perspective, discuss how these were adapted to match the present work and finally present thoroughly the steps I followed to generate and analyse data for this study.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

Having explained my ontological and epistemological positions, as well as the methodological approach I follow in this study, in this chapter I explain this thesis' research methods, i.e. how I conducted this project. While ontology, epistemology, methodology and research methods are all interlinked, the first three are associated with theory whereas the latter with practice. This focus on practical matters is what differentiates it from chapter three and makes it an individual chapter.

I begin this chapter with a discussion on the use of reflexivity in this thesis. Since this project's design has evolved significantly over time, I then explicate the initial research design and outline the reasons for modifying it. Next I detail the final research design, present and justify the procedures I followed to recruit participants, generate and analyse data and discuss some key ethical considerations related to this endeavour.

4.2 Use of Reflexivity

The researcher's reflexivity is a key component of this study's research methods; therefore its presence and specific use in this thesis ought to be explicit from the beginning. In general, reflexivity is described as a process of 'turning your gaze to the self' (Shaw, 2010, p. 234) and drawing attention 'to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 8). In essence, the concept of reflexivity refers to the process of 'examining how the researchers and intersubjective elements impact on and transform the research' (Finlay, 2003, p. 4).

Shaw (2010), drawing on Woolgar's (1988) idea of a 'continuum of reflexivity' in social science research, discusses different positions of the researcher's self-reflection ranging from 'benign introspection' which aims to offer an 'accurate' representation of participants' stories to 'radical constitutive reflexivity', which

'takes the postmodern stance that reality is constructed contemporaneously and no account (whether the researcher's or the participant's) can be valued over another' (Shaw, 2010, p. 234). Similarly, Finlay (2003) identifies five 'variants' of reflexivity or five 'lenses' for the reflexive researcher (2012), ranging from 'introspection' to 'ironic deconstruction'. Reviewing the different 'versions' of reflexivity falls beyond this chapter's aim to present the specific research methods of this thesis. These positions, however, demonstrate that reflexivity and its use in a research project are linked to the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions.

As explained in chapter three, I take an idealist ontological stance and view knowledge as co-constructed and context-dependent. As a consequence, I view awareness of my own cultural and historical context as what allows me to access and attempt to understand other people's worldviews and experiences. This awareness should not be seen as a simplistic way of reducing bias or 'bracketing out' my pre-assumptions in order to represent 'reality', but as a necessary element of being and understanding: if my experience is always context and time-dependent, my interactions with people and interpretations will always be located within a specific context. Following Gadamer's suggestion, to understand, that is, to 'fuse my horizon' with someone else's, I need to be aware of my perspective. As my interpretations belong to me, my thoughts, feelings, actions, as well as wider background and specific context are necessarily part of any investigation I attempt. To that end, self-awareness and reflection upon the intersubjective processes that take place during research are fundamental components of this project's design, data generation and presentation of findings. Correspondingly, transparency of such processes is key (Finlay, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Shaw, 2010; Smith, et al., 2009).

To that end, reflexive comments on process and context are integrated throughout this thesis, rather than concentrated in one section. Already in chapter one I offered information about my background and motivation to conduct this study to explain both the focus of this research and allow the reader to gain understanding of the lens through which this investigation takes place. In this chapter (four), I continue to make references to my own interests, experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions in relation to research methods, as it would be impossible to attempt to explain how I

designed and conducted this study by excluding references to myself, my background and my own processing. Similarly, in chapters five and six, where I present findings, reflexive comments complement my analysis. In the final chapter (seven) I offer a more focused discussion on the researcher's reflexivity, alongside the consideration of this project's limitations. Admittedly, achieving an appropriate balance between the inclusion of my own process and reflections in this thesis, while retaining the focus on the phenomenon under investigation, or to use Finlay's (2002) terminology 'negotiating the swamp', has not always been an easy task. Such challenges will become particularly evident in this chapter.

Having pointed out the centrality of reflexivity to this study, it is also important to be aware of and proclaim the limitations of self-awareness and therefore of the researcher's reflexivity. Following Heidegger's concept of Dasein, individuals are located within a specific cultural and historical context that they cannot exceed. This means that my ability to conceive my own perspective and explicate the reasons why I see things the way I do is also limited. Hence, despite my attempts at self-awareness and transparency with regard to reflexivity there will always be thoughts, actions and interpretations that are not in my immediate consciousness and that are therefore not present in this thesis. Engaging with reflexivity, therefore, should be understood as a stance of introspection and examination of research relationships and processes, which entails being open to new possibilities and questioning things, rather than a certainty of representing 'real' or 'more accurate' accounts through disclosure of personal information and process.

Having clarified this, we can proceed with the description and justification of this thesis' research methods.

4.3 Preliminary Design

4.3.1 Overview

As explained in the literature review, this study is concerned with people who occupy a liminal 'position between the general public and experienced practitioners' (Bondi, 2003b, p. 860), that is, counsellors in training. Given my own concern with

non-nativeness and the literature's gap on this area, the initial design of this project aimed to explore non-native speaking[15] trainees' experiences of intercultural practice. As counselling training and practice are developmental processes (Dryden, et al., 2000), to my mind, a longitudinal design (accessing trainees' experiences at different phases) would result in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. To that end, based on Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) work, I identified four phases during training: A) just before starting clinical placement, B) at the beginning of their placement (three to four months into practice), C) at a stage where more counselling experience was gathered (nine to twelve months) and finally D) near or just after the end of their placement.

4.3.2 Methods in preliminary design

Planning and Rationale

Scholars agree that interviewing is a method in perfect consistency with interpretivist frameworks, as it gives the researcher direct access to participants' accounts of experience (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Barbour, 2008; Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2004; Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2010). Following my epistemology and the aim of this project, I considered interviews to be the most appropriate method for data generation, as they would allow a face-to-face interaction (dialogue) with individuals who had the experience of the phenomenon I was interested in.

Qualitative interviewing can be conducted either individually (in-depth interviews) or collectively (focus groups) (Greenbaum, 2000; Mason, 2002). These two methods serve different purposes and are not antagonistic (Greenbaum, 2000). On the one hand, individual interviews provide access to participants' deeper thoughts and feelings as they allow for more time to be dedicated to each individual (Greenbaum, 2000) and ensure a more confidential environment (Patton, 2002). That said, some

[15] As explained in chapter 2, in this thesis the term refers to individuals who were born and raised in a non-English speaking environment, learned English at a later age and do not consider themselves as speaking English at a native-like level.

participants may feel more comfortable sharing their experiences in a group than in a one to one situation (Barbour, 2008; Morgan, 1997). On the other hand, focus groups (FG) are ideal for observations of group communication and meaning-construction through social interaction (Bryman, 2008; Barbour, 2008). Scholars also point out that focus groups can be enriching for projects at initial stages, as they yield insight into several people's accounts, and allow observation of the level of consensus within populations (Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Wilkinson, 1998). Focus group discussions may also facilitate participants' cognitive processing, as listening to others' stories can promote explorations of abstract concepts (Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Patton, 2002), rendering them an appropriate method for exploring ambiguous topics.

With this in mind, I decided that a focus group method was appropriate to collect data for participants in phase A (pre-placement), while individual interviews for phases B, C and D. In phase A, participants would discuss *expectations of upcoming practice*, a subject not as 'tangible' as actual experiences of practice; a focus group design was therefore anticipated to facilitate this process. In addition, phase A would take place at an early stage for my overall project. Accessing several people's opinions and expectations at this stage could facilitate the refinement of the research focus and illuminate new areas for investigation. Individual interviews with participants in phases B, C and D would then offer sufficient time for in-depth explorations of participants' particular experiences, but also provide an appropriate, confidential environment for them to discuss aspects of their client work.

Data Collection and Preliminary Analysis

After receiving ethical approval by the relevant Research Ethics Committee, I invited five non-native speaking trainees[16] to discuss their expectations of the upcoming intercultural counselling practice (see appendix for Focus Group Information Leaflet).

[16] As participants in the 'preliminary' and 'final' research design were drawn from the same pool, details on sample recruitment procedures will be discussed in the 'final research design' section.

The inclusion criteria for this sample required individuals to be:

- Counselling trainees working towards a professional qualification at one UK academic institution
- In pre-placement phase
- Non-native English speakers
- Migrated to UK for the purpose of training to be a counsellor

On the scheduled day one participant did not attend, so the focus group consisted of four members. The discussion, which lasted fifty-seven minutes, was audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The interviewing process was relatively unstructured: the overall theme was introduced (beginning counselling practice) and introductory questions invited participants' to share their cultural backgrounds and training programmes. Participants were then prompted to discuss thoughts, responses and feelings related to their forthcoming practice in relation to their foreignness and their cultural and linguistic difference (for details, see Focus Group Aide-Memoire in Appendices). In terms of analysis, the transcript was examined for general themes and patterns deriving from the data, following the principles of thematic analysis, a qualitative method aiming at identifying patterns of meaning and illustrating the most salient themes in the phenomenon under study (Joffe, 2012). These themes will not be presented in detail here, as they did not form part of the final design. Overall, however, participants appeared preoccupied with their linguistic and cultural difference and worried about their adequacy to practise in the UK.

A theme that attracted my attention was participants' tendency to compare their situation to their native English-speaking peers. The particularity of this theme lies in the fact that based on the focus group discussion, it was clear that trainees compared themselves to native English-speaking, non-British peers, i.e. individuals who were also culturally diverse but spoke English as a mother tongue. As this theme played a central role in the shaping the new research design, it is worth illustrating it with an excerpt:

> *P3: my main concern is about language and my culture as well, but I see all... all peers in our course seems very worried and very nervous, I just wonder what are they nervous about? (they all laugh a lot)*
>
> *P2: they don't have the language issue, right? (laughs)*
>
> *P3: yeah, they speak English well..*

This is not the place to engage with analysis; yet it is worth noticing that P3 and P2 (and potentially the whole group based on the intensity of laughter) perceive linguistic difference as a central element of intercultural counselling practice. Second language use seems to be the main source of practice-related anxiety and in fact, the only justifiable one ('*I just wonder what are they nervous about?*'). The interesting factor in this situation is that participants seem to assume that cultural differences are not expected to cause anxiety in cases where language is 'shared'. This made me reflect upon what renders a 'shared' language. Are all 'Englishes' the same? Does a practitioner from New York, for example, share a language with a Glaswegian client? The literature review section highlighted the interdependency between language and culture and the fluidity of the concept of nativeness/non-nativeness (from a linguistic perspective) (Faez, 2011; Park, 2007). The above-mentioned theme from the focus group was directly related to this body of literature, pointing to the lack of scholarly work in the area of linguistic and cultural diversity in the field of psychotherapy.

This combination sparked my interest to also approach native-speaking, non-British trainees, to investigate their experiences of practising interculturally and explore whether they identified language-related influences of their 'foreignness' in counselling practice. At the same time, consultation around developmental work of this study led to the realisation that this initial design did not match the research aims of the study: a longitudinal study was not anticipated to lead to an in-depth exploration of the experience of intercultural practice, but to an investigation of how this experience changes over time. Therefore, an adjustment needed to be made, either to the project's aim or to its design. Following my primary interest in non-native speaking trainees' experiences of intercultural practice and my newly

generated curiosity regarding native-speaking, foreign trainees' perspectives on the same phenomenon, I decided to change the study's design, move away from a longitudinal approach, and incorporate a new aspect in this exploration. Namely, to interview foreign-born, non-native and native speaking trainees about their experiences of beginning practice in the UK.

4.4 Final Research Design

4.4.1 Overview

The construction of a new design called for a 'snapshot' approach that would lead to in-depth exploration of participants' experiences of a particular phase of their training. Accessing native and non-native speaking foreign trainees' accounts would illuminate the phenomenon of intercultural practice from a wider perspective and allow me to investigate the centrality of language as an element of cultural difference in counselling practice. This design would also offer insight into foreign counselling trainees' experiences of intercultural practice from an angle that had not been addressed in existing literature, i.e. linguistic difference, without however restricting the investigation to a 'narrow' concept of 'native/non-nativeness'.

So this thesis' final research design sets out to explore experiences of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice of two groups of foreign trainees, i.e. native and non-native speakers. It consists of two sub-studies, namely study A and B, which explore respectively experiences of non-native speaking and native speaking, non-British counsellors in training. Study A can be understood as a combination of phases B and C of the preliminary design, investigating in-session experiences of non-native speaking trainees at a beginning phase. Study B on the other hand can be seen as a new perspective of this phenomenon that was generated by a gap in the literature, alongside the preoccupations that non-native speaking trainees expressed in the focus group. In both studies, trainees were 'novices' (Orlinsky, Rønnestad, et al., 2005) having accumulated between six and ten months of clinical experience.

The absence of literature on the experience of native speaking, foreign practitioners (and more generally individuals) gives this project, and particularly study B, a very

exploratory nature, which consequently involves challenges in collecting and analysing data and also entails an overall risk: setting out to investigate a topic that may not be central to participants' experiences. This issue will be discussed in chapter six, where study B is presented and discussed and chapter seven where the two studies are brought together.

As a final point, I need to be transparent about managing the preliminary design data. Therefore, prior to detailing the specific methods of this study I will explicate the use of the focus groups data in the final design.

4.4.2 Use of Focus Group Data

Moving away from the initial longitudinal design, alongside the project's focus on trainees' *experiences* rather than their expectations of intercultural practice, left no space for use of the FG data in the final research design. Discarding the FG data was not an action I was comfortable with, as I wanted to honour my relationship with participants, and make use of the time that participants had dedicated to my project and the stories they had shared. Initially I tried to incorporate this data in the final design by regarding it as useful information advancing understanding of the participants' worlds, and considered conducting a second FG with the native-speaking trainees to 'equalise' the two datasets. Upon reflection, I realised that the rationale for this was not based on intentional decisions that would enrich my understanding of the phenomenon I wanted to investigate but on an attempt to accommodate prior actions. At the same time, I was aware that part of my responsibility towards research integrity was to build a robust and appropriate research design (Bond, 2004). I found myself in a dilemma between the two ethical considerations[17], namely valuing participants' contributions and promoting research integrity.

Given that the FG had been conducted with good intention, and there was no real harm to participants by not presenting their contributions in detail, I decided not to

[17] Ethics will be discussed more fully at the end of this chapter.

include these in the final design and follow a rationale that would lead to a robust research project. The factor that really facilitated this decision was the great influence that the focus group data had on the formulation of the final design. As mentioned, the final study involves two sub-groups of participants, non-native speaking and native, non-British trainees. This is related to the focus group participants' tendency to compare themselves to their native-speaking, foreign peers. To my mind, the fact that the final design is borne out of this focus group (alongside a literature gap) is an acknowledgment of the significance of their participation and can be seen as making use of the focus group data in the final research design. In other words, ultimately, the focus group informed and refined the operationalisation of this project (Bryman, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Peek & Fothergill, 2007).

Having clarified this important detail, I now proceed with the explication of the specific research methods of this project's final research design, i.e. sample recruitment, data generation and analysis procedures.

4.4.3 Sampling and Recruitment

As the two studies are similar in terms of participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, this section presents the methods adopted for both studies collectively. Distinctions are provided where necessary.

First of all, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis's commitment to idiography calls for purposeful, small-sized and relatively homogeneous samples that yield insight into a specific experience and allow researchers to explore this experience in depth (Larkin & Thomson, 2012; Smith, et al., 2009). With regards to **purposeful sampling**, I selected my participants based on specific criteria that met my project's aim.

Inclusion criteria:

- Counsellors in training working towards professional qualification at one UK academic institution
- Six to ten months of client work experience
- Having moved to the UK for the purpose of training as a counsellor

-For study A:

- Non-native English speakers (based on self-perception of language mastery and language of country of origin)

-For study B

- Non-British, native English speakers (based on self-perception of language mastery and language of country of origin)

Exclusion criteria for both studies:

- Speaking two languages, one of which English, at a native-like level

The presence of this exclusion criterion aimed to reduce the complexity already inherent in dividing participants based on native/non-native criteria and derived from personal interactions with individuals that fall into the category of what the early literature would describe as 'perfect bilinguals' (Bloomfield, 1935). The inclusion criteria will be explained further in view of homogeneity of sample.

With regards to **sample size**, IPA is non-prescriptive and there is no rigid guidance on participant numbers (Eatough & Smith, 2006a; Eatough & Smith, 2006b; Larkin, et al., 2006; Smith, 2010; Smith, et al., 2009). What is essential is a detailed, good-quality (interpretative) analysis (Smith, 2011a). Nonetheless, to highlight the idiographic character of the method, Smith et al (2009) suggest that three to six participants is a sufficient number for student projects (three being enough for masters' projects). Interestingly, Smith (2004; 2009) encourages PhD students to take up 'bold' idiographic designs, that is, single-case studies for their thesis. As I was interested in native and non-native speakers' experiences of early intercultural practice, and, as I will explain, not of a particular ethnicity or nationality, I did not follow Smith's suggestion for a single-case study design. Considering the specific time and word restrictions of a PhD thesis, but also the dual nature of the investigation, I set an upper limit of ten participants for this project, a number that would allow me to explore transcripts in depth and also present participants' experiences in detail. My contact with experienced IPA theorists (Paul Flowers and Pnina Shinebourne) through participation in training workshops and the regional (Scottish) IPA interest group corroborated this pragmatic sampling decision. Ultimately, I recruited a total of eight participants (four non-native trainees for study A and four native-speaking for study B). This number was shaped by practical limitations in my attempt to ensure some level of **homogeneity**.

As mentioned earlier, following the method's commitment to idiography, IPA studies use fairly homogeneous samples of people who share a particular experience. Using two sub-samples in this study may not seem in line with this requirement for sample homogeneity; nonetheless, these two groups share the experience under investigation, i.e. being a foreign counselling trainee who practises interculturally. This concurs with Kissil et al.'s position who suggest that

> in the midst of the diverse experiences of immigrants, there are important commonalities that are rooted in the life changing experience of living in the US after being born and raised in a different country and culture
>
> (Kissil, et al., 2013, p. 135)

Participants' different cultural and linguistic backgrounds illuminate this phenomenon of 'being foreign' from different angles. As Smith and colleagues point out, there are cases where heterogeneity of sample is desired, 'so that the phenomenon (...) can be understood from more than one perspective' (2009, p. 49). Although not very common, there are a number of published IPA studies with heterogeneous samples (e.g. de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Dunn, 2012; Larkin, Clifton, & De Visser, 2009; Larkin & Griffiths, 2004; Wane, Larkin, Earl-Gray, & Smith, 2009). Smith et al. (2009) forewarn however that these designs involve more demanding analysis. This warning alerted me to keep the number of participants in each study low and ensure internal (within each study) and external (between the two studies) homogeneity by regulating other factors.

The decision on which factors to keep homogeneous depends on what is being studied itself (Smith, et al., 2009). Given the profession's demographic tendencies, recruiting only female participants was a pragmatic choice rather than a purposeful one. The third participation criterion, namely having moved to the UK for training purposes, aimed to regulate participants' exposure to local culture and use of language. Retrospectively, it also unified age range[18]. With regards to participants' client work experience, I decided on a period of six to ten months within starting

[18] Kept confidential to protect participants' identity.

placement, an amount of time which would allow participants to have accumulated some variety in their client experience, but would still allow me to capture trainees' experiences at a beginning phase, where practices may be conscious and not associated with the natural passage of time (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). This was not anticipated to homogenise client work experience with accuracy, but attempted to unify the training phase participants were in.

To that end, I also decided to recruit people who received training in the same academic institution (in diverse courses or programmes) and practised in the same region (city), following Hill and colleagues' suggestion that 'training experiences are undoubtedly influenced by the instructor, the individual trainees and the curriculum' (2007, p. 437). While I could not standardise participants' actual experiences of client work I could at least ensure consistency of theoretical orientation through training, an element potentially influencing attitudes towards clients and counselling practice, as well as towards difference and intercultural experience. The site of the research remains confidential to safeguard participants' identity. To that end, I refrain from providing more details on the training programme and its theoretical orientation, philosophy and values, which are all elements that would facilitate the contextualisation of the study and of participants' experiences. The interrelated complexity of this choice is discussed in the section 'Ethical Considerations' at the end of this chapter.

The final homogeneity-related issue was managing internal linguistic and cultural diversity. As stated earlier, research design was based mainly on self-identification either as a native or a non-native speaking foreign trainee. With regards to language, following the project's theoretical framework, participants' self-perception of linguistic mastery was taken into consideration, regardless of their actual competence. Naturally, levels of language command varied, but overall met participants' academic setting's requirements. Similarly, the homogenizing factor regarding cultural identity was participants' 'foreignness' and not specific countries of origin. I did not seek to explore the experiences of a specific group (e.g. Chinese students), but of foreign trainees in general, which as Pattison's work suggests, 'share more characteristics than might be expected' (2003, p. 113). Pringle,

Drummond, McLafferty, and Hendry (2011) argue that very narrow and unified samples may make transferability to other populations difficult. As explained, the rationale for my decision to explore two sub-groups was to explore the phenomenon of intercultural practice from a wider perspective and contribute to the expansion of knowledge not only of one specific cultural group but of the broader community of international students. The limitations of this choice are discussed in chapter seven.

Once eligible participants were identified (n=11), they were contacted directly via email that entailed a short invitation to participation and a detailed information leaflet outlining the research aim, the theme of the interview and basic ethical considerations of participation (Appendices). Interviews were arranged with participants who responded to this invitation (n=8). Three out of these eight participants had already taken part in the 'preliminary' focus group. Undoubtedly, this created some disparity in the way I related to my interviewees and was taken into consideration during analysis. My role as an interviewer and my positioning in relation to participants will be discussed further in the following section on data generation.

4.4.4 Generating Data: Conducting Semi-structured Interviews

Linking epistemology and methods of data collection and analysis

As explained in the 'preliminary design' section, individual interviews were identified as an appropriate method to explore participants' subjective experiences in depth. Individual, semi-structured interviews are also an appropriate method of data generation for my research method, IPA, as they:

> allow the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas that arise
>
> (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 57)

Linking my interpretivist epistemological position to the methods undertaken in this research, interviewing is not conceptualised as an objective 'tool' expected to access participants' actual experiences, but as a contextually bound interaction aiming to

explore how participants make sense of their experiences when asked to recall and discuss them (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Hence in this project interview data consists of individuals' representations of experiences, as these are verbalised, for half of the participants in a second language, in the context of a specific dialogic interaction.

Interview design and my role as an interviewer

To match the theoretical and methodological foundations of this project, I conducted 'phenomenological interviews' that generate 'detailed, in-depth descriptions of human experiences' (Roulston, 2010, p. 16). Following the strands within phenomenology explained in chapter three, phenomenological interviews can produce a range of data from merely descriptive to more interpretative (Roulston, 2010). Consistent with my dual methodological approach (hermeneutic phenomenology), I adopted an interactive way of conducting phenomenological interviews, where meaning is negotiated with the interviewee, retaining however a focus on participants' experiences. This is often referred to in the literature as 'active interviewing' (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003). This type of interviewing was particularly facilitative, especially as I conducted interviews interculturally; engaging in a dialogue that involved my active participation, was essential to 'breaking down the barriers' of cultural and linguistic difference (Freeman, 2006, p. 83).

In terms of structure, the interviews followed a 'river and channel' pattern, according to which the interviewer follows up participants' answers in order to explore their accounts in depth, rather than a 'tree and branch' model where pre-planned questions explore different themes in the same depth to cover the whole subject (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Given the lack of background literature and the exploratory nature of my project, this pattern seemed appropriate as it was flexible enough to follow the participants' lived experiences. The interview schedule consisted of an opening question on participants' training programmes and placement sites that would put my participants at ease and provide me with some background information on their experience. This was followed by three general questions or themes. These main questions explored (a) 'second' language-related experiences in practice, (b)

different culture- or foreignness-related experiences in practice, and (c) participants' ways of dealing with their difference and foreignness in practice. A final question invited participants to introduce issues that were not anticipated by the interview schedule (see Aide-Memoire for study A and B in Appendices). This final question was consistent with the flexible nature of IPA and aimed to 'allow unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis' (Smith, 2004, p. 43). Overall, Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest that the IPA interviewer may move away from the schedule to enter new areas, but needs to ensure that the focus of the conversation remains on the phenomenon under exploration.

Related to that was also the matter of appropriate use of self in the interview setting, a process which I often found challenging to assess. In general, I phrased interview questions in an open manner, inviting participants to discuss the aspects of experience that were important to them. One of my key preoccupations was that I might limit this study through projecting and imposing my own fears and attitudes towards difference and non-nativeness (discussed in chapter one) onto my participants' stories, potentially silencing their accounts and guiding their contributions. As I view data as co-constructed, my influence on the potential emergence of these themes in the dataset is not questioned. In an attempt to allow space for participants' stories to be told, however, I generally refrained from disclosing personal thoughts and experiences on practising in a second language. Nonetheless, there were times where participants would ask me questions about my experiences in the host culture, which I answered with honesty; or moments where I would use my thoughts or existing literature to stir conversation. Also, I inevitably interfered with participants' narrations to secure the discussion's relevance to the research themes or explore a particular point further. These more 'active' interventions generated some anxiety: what part of the data was mirroring participants' experiences? How much of 'my self' was, and ought to be, present in my interviewing capacity? Avis (2002) offers an illustrative depiction of this anxiety:

> I was caught between wanting to position, and mobilize, interpersonal engagement as central to the research process, and a concern that too much personalized involvement would be disruptive of my efforts to collect and disseminate research data.
>
> (Avis, 2002, p. 196)

As explained, although I was conscious of the inevitable influence of the researcher on data underpinned by my epistemology, ensuring that I was not imposing my own agenda on participants was also important. To that end, I tried to be conscious of my stance and my specific contributions during data generation. In addition, when conducting analysis, I reflected further on these interactions and examined even closer responses that seemed related to my contributions. This process is part of the presentation of findings and my reflexive commentary, i.e. my interpretation of data and will become evident in chapters five and six.

Correspondingly, I also attended to my role as an interviewer and the power asymmetries present in the interviewing encounters. In spite of anticipating some power dynamics in the research relationships, the actual process of meeting and interacting with participants has greatly advanced this work, substantiating Bondi's (2003a) claim that unanticipated similarities and differences with participants are likely to become apparent during research. For example, prior to conducting the interviews, I was aware of the power that is often attributed to the interviewer as being an 'intellectual authority' (Gadd, 2004) and being in control of the interviewing setting, in the position of asking questions and directing the dialogue (Kvale, 2006). To my mind however, this was somewhat 'counterbalanced' by my participants' 'embodied' expertise in counselling theory and practice, of which I only had theoretical knowledge. Interactions with research participants however, illuminated a number of similarities and differences and power asymmetries that I had not attended to, making me realise the complexity of considering difference when conducting (intercultural) research, and particularly face-to-face interviews.

An illustrative example of this is my disregard of the visibility of ethnic difference between me and my Asian participants. Preoccupied as I was with my own non-nativeness and the interrelated powerlessness that this entailed for me, I positioned

myself 'equally' in relation to the non-native trainees and saw the group of native speakers as being different, and in fact, more powerful. Interaction with one Asian participant, however, revealed my naïveté. Through this participant's unexpected and powerful comment on our ethnic difference ('*you look like them!'*) I realised that attending to differences, especially when conducting research interculturally, is a demanding task that requires negotiation and reflection upon self-positioning (Bondi, 2003a). Wilkinson and Kitzinger state that 'unless the researched group is defined on just one narrowingly specified parameter', the researcher's positioning shifts 'moment-by-moment across the course of an interview' (2013, pp. 251-252). While my positioning in relation to the specific parameter (native/non-nativeness) may have remained stable throughout the interviews, a number of other positions varied across cases and shifted over time. These realisations were reached through 're-immersion' in the 'intersubjective dynamics of interviews' (Gadd, 2004, p. 398), that is, through my reflexive analysis of data. In that sense, reflection upon research relationships has greatly advanced my work in a variety of ways (Bondi, 2003a).

4.4.5 Analysing Data: Conducting IPA

As stated, I conducted eight interviews in total (four for each study), lasting between fifty-five and seventy-five minutes. These were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis followed the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Larkin & Thomson, 2012; Smith, 2008; Smith, et al., 2009).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is a method that aims to 'identify, describe and understand two aspects of the respondents' accounts: their 'key objects of concern' and their 'experiential claims' (Larkin, et al., 2006, p. 111). Key objects of concern include anything that matters to participants, while experiential claims refer to 'linguistic and narrative clues as to the meaning of these objects' (Larkin & Thomson, 2012, p. 106). Overall, IPA pays attention to:

> all aspects of lived experience, participants' wishes, desires, feelings, motivation, belief systems, through to how these manifest themselves or not in behaviour and action
>
> (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 181)

In terms of analysis, 'key concerns' and 'experiential claims' are the major features of the descriptive, phenomenological aspect of IPA where the researcher 'gives voice' to participants' experiences. To do justice to IPA's hermeneutic character, the researcher is also required to offer interpretations, i.e. 'to make sense' of what 'it means for the participant to have such concerns, within their particular context' (Larkin, et al., 2006, p. 113). These interpretations are expected to exceed the participants' words and conceptualisations, yet at the same time remain grounded in them. The type of interpretation offered depends upon 'the commitments and interests of the researcher, the research questions in hand and the more general requirement for coherent analysis'; in IPA, different interpretations are equally 'good' as long as they are transparent and can be traced back to the transcript (Larkin, et al., 2006, p. 116).

Interpretation in IPA is influenced by Ricoeur's positions on 'hermeneutics of empathy' where it functions as a recollection of meanings, and 'hermeneutics of suspicion' where it divulges 'lies of consciousness' (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 32). Applied to IPA, hermeneutics of empathy aim at reconstructing participants' original experience in its own terms, while hermeneutics of suspicion incorporate external theoretical perspectives to illuminate a phenomenon (Smith, 2011b; Smith, et al., 2009). IPA suggests that researchers should aim to view participant's experience 'from the inside', but also 'from a different angle, ask questions and puzzle over things they are saying' (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 36). As Larkin, Watts and Clifton put it, the researcher's role is to generate an 'insider's account', but also seek 'meaning and commonality (....) *beyond* that point' (2006, p. 116). In my analysis of participants' accounts in chapters five and six, I offer interpretations that reflect a combination of these two positions.

While highlighting the method's detachment from rigid prescriptions (Smith, 2010), overall guidelines for conducting IPA are available to facilitate researchers to undertake analysis (e.g. Larkin & Thomson, 2012; Smith, et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). As Smith points out, researchers 'cannot do good qualitative research by following a cookbook' (2004, p. 40); analysts are expected to adjust and advance these guidelines to match individual projects and researchers. Overall however,

theorists agree that IPA includes: detailed, line-by-line coding of the transcript and identification of patterns, convergence and divergence within accounts; and reflexive 'dialogue' with the data, existing knowledge and the researcher's bias that leads to interpretative accounts. This process takes the form of:

> the detailed examination of one case until some degree of closure or gestalt has been achieved, then moving on to a detailed analysis of the second case, and so on through the corpus of cases. Only when that has been achieved, is there an attempt to conduct a cross-case analysis
>
> (Smith, 2004, p. 41)

Regarding the presentation of findings, IPA involves developing a structure that mirrors relationships between themes in a logical, transparent way that allows tracing back to original material. The final 'product' of analysis is a narrative that includes data extracts and informs the reader of the researcher's interpretations. IPA gains validity through the researcher's transparent reflections upon perceptions and processes and 'the use of supervision, collaboration or audit to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation' (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 80).

In the following section I explicate the specific steps I went through to generate findings and how I adapted Smith et al.'s (2009) method to match this design and my particular skills or limitations. I conducted analysis in a second language and some of my participants were non-native speakers, thus, some adjustments took place with regards to the linguistic aspect of the method. Smith (2004) touched upon the topic of language-related issues in IPA by suggesting adjusting the method's non-interventionist interviewing attitude when non-native interviewees are involved. In his later work, Smith pointed out that the majority of IPA papers are published in English, a fact that impedes the method's 'uptake in countries whose first language is not English' (2011a, p. 13). While this is indeed important, I would suggest that given the method's growing popularity among researchers (Smith, 2011a) and the constantly growing cultural diversity in British institutions of higher education (Pattison & Robson, 2013), the topic of foreign researchers undertaking IPA in a second language merits further exploration. In this thesis, this is addressed through my reflections on this process and the interrelated limitations of such an endeavour.

Overall, my analysis followed an idiographic process: Each transcript was analysed separately until a table of themes reflecting each participant's 'key object concerns' and 'experiential claims' was generated. Once all four interviews of study A were analysed, recurrent themes were identified across cases. A graph of recurrent themes was generated for the group and findings were written up. This process was then repeated for study B. Next I detail the specific steps of my analysis.

Coding

Prior to engaging with coding I read each transcript twice, synchronously with listening to the audio file to immerse myself in the data as suggested by Smith et al., (2009). I also noted down any powerful memories of the interview or striking observations about the transcript in order to distance myself from potentially distracting ideas (ibid). A clean transcript was then printed with numbered lines and wide margins and different coloured pens were used for initial commentary. IPA involves three 'levels' of coding: a descriptive, a linguistic and a conceptual one. In my analysis of the first two interviews I conducted these 'levels' of coding at consecutive 'circles', as suggested by Smith et al. (2009). Once I felt more confident about the detailed outcome of my analysis, I followed a less structured coding process, similar to the one described by Smith and Osborn (2008), where all types of comments emerge from one (slower) circle of analysis. This proved to be particularly facilitative, as trying to prevent myself from noting conceptual and linguistic comments in earlier circles was challenging. Next I append an example of a coded excerpt to illustrate this process:

Table 1: Key to Coding Colours

Blue: Descriptive comments
Purple: Linguistic comments
Green: Conceptual comments

Table 2: Example of Coding

	and for me the fact that I have an obvious…ehh difference, and obvious…weakness that cannot be hidden, **forces** me to explore that with the client. Whereas, now that's my fantasy, so, whereas if I were a native speaker, then I would take perhaps many things for granted...?	Personal experience Obvious difference – obvious weakness Language is a weakness and cannot be hidden If she could hide it, she would? 'Forces' sounds rather strong, out of her will She seems to perceive the inevitability of her 'weakness' as something that urges her to explore (what??) with client (positive aspect?) → is this a defence? Is it outcome of her counselling training (experiential learning)? Fantasy → expert talk? Comparison with native speakers → language central feature in foreign identity? If/perhaps/questioning tone → hesitation? Native speakers take things for granted So her weakness is an asset in practice? Benefit of foreignness? Managing her difficulty by identifying positive elements?

The linguistic aspect of coding proved to be a challenging element in the analytic process. As Smith et al. suggest researchers need to attend to 'pronoun use, pauses, laughter, functional aspects of the language, repetition, tone, degree of fluency (articulate or hesitant)' (2009, p. 88), and how these may reflect content and meaning. As a second-language user I was challenged at two levels: first, at identifying those elements; to address that, I conducted the 'linguistic circle' of coding twice to ensure this was done adequately. Additionally, I took parts of my analysis to the regional (Scottish) IPA interest group where members audited my coding, which served as a way of enhancing validity and quality of analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Secondly, even when linguistic codes were identified, I hesitated to make claims about language use and its relation to content and meaning, particularly with non-native participants. For example, I often wondered whether a participant's pause related to her attempt to be articulate in a second language or whether it indicated some underlying factor. To manage this, I attended closely to each participant's speech patterns throughout the transcript and noted moments where tone or fluency changed in comparison to their usual speech. Overall, however, my interpretations that are rooted mainly in linguistic codes remain particularly interrogative in nature and are intensely transparent.

Creating Emergent themes

Emergent themes were noted in orange on the left-side margin and as Smith et al. (2009) suggested, derive from the codes and not the transcript itself. At this stage, the aim is to create a concise statement of what is significant in a specific point of a participants' interview. These themes reflect both participants' original words and the researcher's interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). The same extract will be used for illustration:

Table 3: Example of Emergent Themes

Linguistic difference is a weakness that cannot be concealed Compulsory coping strategy: making use of weakness in practice Native/non-native comparison Linguistic difference promoting curiosity and openness	'and for me the fact that I have an obvious…ehh difference, and obvious…weakness that cannot be hidden, **forces** me to explore that with the client. Whereas, now that's my fantasy, so, whereas if I were a native speaker, then I would take perhaps many things for granted...?'	Personal experience Obvious difference – obvious weakness Language is a weakness and cannot be hidden If she could hide it, she would? 'Forces' sounds rather strong, out of her will She seems to perceive the inevitability of her 'weakness' as something that urges her to explore (what??) with client (positive aspect?) → is this a defence? Is it outcome of her counselling training (experiential learning)? Fantasy → expert talk? Comparison with native speakers → language central feature in foreign identity? If/perhaps/questioning tone → hesitation? Native speakers take things for granted (disadvantage) So her weakness is an asset in practice? Benefit of foreignness? Managing her difficulty by identifying positive elements?

In the process of creating emergent themes I faced another difficulty associated with conducting research in a second language. Being able to mirror participants' experiences and my interpretations in a concise and accurate manner proved to be a demanding process, with which I continued to struggle in all the following stages of analysis. Supervision and further reflection facilitated the refinement of themes. Additionally, following other IPA researchers' initiative (e.g. Eatough & Smith, 2006a), where appropriate, I used participants' quotations to name themes, a process which is also thought to further root analysis in participants' accounts (Pringle, et al.,

2011). As I became more experienced in analysis, I generated fewer, more abstract and inclusive emergent themes (for the first transcript I produced one hundred and twenty-eight emergent themes, later refined to ninety-four, while for the last, fifty-seven). Each emergent theme was followed by the respective transcript line number to allow tracing back to original data and (after trying different strategies), written down on post-it notes and spread out on a large surface.

Identifying connections

The following step was to find connections and patterns between emergent themes. Smith et al. (2009) suggest clustering emergent themes by using diverse techniques: abstraction (identifying patterns across themes and creating a super-ordinate theme), subsumption (one emergent theme becomes super-ordinate as it brings together other themes), polarization (focusing on differences between themes), contextualization (identify contextual elements), numeration (frequency of emergent themes in the interview) and, finally, function (based on the function that the theme has in the transcript) (2009, p.96-98). Using these techniques, I created master and super-ordinate themes, consisting of traceable emergent themes (though line numbers). This process resulted in a Table of Themes for each participant:

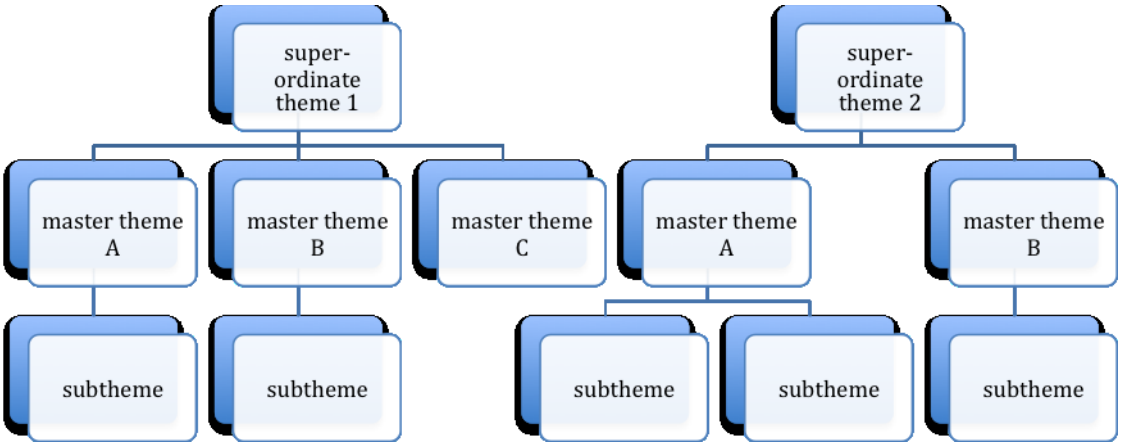
Table 4: Example of Table of Themes

Super-ordinate theme 1	**Super-ordinate theme 2**	**Super-ordinate theme 3**
Master theme A • Emergent (line no) • Emergent (line no) • Emergent (line no)	Master theme A • Emergent (line no) • Emergent (line no) • Emergent (line no)	Master theme A • Emergent (line no) • Emergent (line no)
Master theme B • Emergent (line no) •	Master theme B •	Master theme B • .....

Looking for patterns across 'cases'

The next step of analysis involved looking for connections across participants' accounts, identifying dominant themes and trying to find how a theme in one case can facilitate illumination of other cases (Smith et al. 2009). The four 'tables of themes' were crosschecked for commonalities, differences and connections at all levels of themes (e.g. emergent or super-ordinate) following the same procedures described earlier for clustering emergent themes. As an outcome, a structure reflecting the relationship between themes was generated. This is often a table (e.g. Larkin & Thomson, 2012, p. 113) but can also be a graphic representation, figure or circular account (Smith et al., 2009). The important thing is to represent relationships in a clear and traceable manner. I chose to present recurrent themes in a graphic representation that took the following form:

Figure 2: Example of figure for recurrent themes



This process however generated a concern: what counts as 'recurrent' in a sample of four participants? As a general rule, I considered recurrent the themes that were present in at least three cases of each study. If a fourth participant reported different or opposing interrelated experiences, these were included in the theme as 'divergence'. In some cases, I also included themes that seemed particularly central

to the accounts of two participants (and relevant to the study) and this is noted explicitly. Overall, I tried to remain close to IPA's aim to account for what is common in the data while pointing out what is distinct as well (Larkin & Griffiths, 2004).

Presenting Findings

The final step of IPA analysis involves presenting findings in a 'full narrative account which is comprehensible, systematic and persuasive' (Smith et al., 2009, p.109). In my case, I follow a 'case within theme' approach (ibid), that is, I present themes separately and include excerpts from three (sometimes four) participants, following Smith's (2011a) suggestion for good quality IPA projects with samples of between four and eight participants. The overall aim was to allow the reader to understand what themes emerged and were common across cases, but also gain insight into each participant's individual account (Smith, 2004). This will become apparent in chapters five and six. The themes and the structure of the findings' presentation have moved away from the interview schedule questions, indicating the project's commitment to participants' experience instead of imposing the researcher's agenda (Smith et al., 2009).

To conclude, once this process was finalized for study A, it was repeated for study B. In chapter seven I discuss the following and final step, i.e. the synthesis of the two studies.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Designing and conducting research in an ethical manner, naturally involves addressing various issues. In this chapter I have already touched upon concerns that were related to ethics (e.g. the use of the FG data in the final design, the researcher's linguistic competence to conduct IPA and the power dynamics in intercultural interviewing) and discussed how I managed those. In this section I address some additional considerations inherent in this work. Given the complexity of dealing with ethics though (Clark & Sharf, 2007), this discussion does not aspire to be

comprehensive; rather, it focuses on some key issues related to this project, aiming to demonstrate the way in which I approached and dealt with those.

Richardson and McMullan note that researchers who are 'members of a professional society will agree to abide by a code of ethics' (2007, p. 1126). Similarly, the Ethics Policy of the School of Health in Social Science at Edinburgh University (2011) expects all research conducted by its students and staff to conform to the codes of ethics promoted by the respective professional bodies. Given the study's location within the field of counselling and psychotherapy, this work conforms to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's (BACP) ethical framework. Compiled by Bond (2004; 2010), this consists of four main principles: trustworthiness, ensuring participants' safety, ethically managing research relationships, and maximising the project's integrity. It needs to be noted that the profession's codes of ethical research formed the foundation of my actions; nonetheless, I negotiated these principles in relation to particular situations that I encountered, rather than perceiving them as universal guidelines to follow blindly. This is in line with a Foucauldian position of 'situational ethics' or 'contextualism' (Flyvbjerg, 2001) and will be better understood through the following discussion. Hence, in this section I discuss how I engaged with the above-mentioned principles to handle specific ethical challenges in relation to designing the project, generating data and interacting with participants as well as managing their contributions.

To begin with, an essential component of ethical research practice is ensuring participants' safety and preventing maleficence (Bond, 2004; 2010). A manifestation of this endeavour is the protection of participants from harm, be it physical, emotional or of any other kind (Fontana & Frey, 2005). While participation in this study entailed no risk of physical harm, I needed to take measures that would ensure their emotional well-being. First of all, being interviewed and audio recorded can be an intimidating or stressful experience for research participants (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012; Kvale, 1996); the actual topic of discussion may also evoke emotional reactions in individuals (Roulston, et al., 2003). To reduce my interviewees' potential anxiety, I informed them about the nature of the interviews upon invitation and arranged for the interviews to take place in a private environment

where it was anticipated that participants would feel secure. On the day of the interview I ensured that participants were at ease prior to commencing. During the interviews, I attended to any signs of discomfort and was prepared to stop the process if I became aware of such indications. This did not prove necessary. In one case however, upon arrival, a participant disclosed being preoccupied with a specific event related to her client work. I suggested rescheduling for another day or cancelling the interview. The participant assured me that she was not overwhelmed and that she wanted to discuss this in the interview as it was related to her cultural background. Thinking 'on my feet' (Mason, 2002), I followed my principle of considering participants as experts in their own lives, trusted her ability to make informed decisions and proceeded with the interview. Her preoccupation however, was taken into consideration in the analysis of the case, as it influenced how I related to her.

Another area related to safeguarding participants is associated with respecting their 'right to privacy', that is, protecting their identity (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The key terms in this area are confidentiality and anonymity. While closely related and often used interchangeably, these terms should not be taken for synonyms. Ensuring anonymity, i.e. not disclosing the participants' names, is only 'one way in which confidentiality is operationalised' (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008, p. 417). To ensure anonymity, my participants' contributions are presented through pseudonyms, which participants chose for themselves. This was a deliberate decision, aiming to facilitate my participants' process of identifying their own contributions, should they read my research outputs, and one that advances my study's integrity through an additional 'action' of transparency. Confidentiality is a broader concept that involves refraining from discussing participants' identities and personal information with others, as well as presenting findings in a manner that does not expose participants' identity (Wiles, et al., 2008).

In regards to the former, I have not revealed my participants' identities to anyone; signed consent forms were kept locked at all times; participants' interviews (audio files) were saved in a password-protected archive and I was the only one having access to the raw data. Given the small pool from which I recruited, however,

confidentiality issues turned out to be more complicated than anticipated, and in fact, to require continuous renegotiation. Next I offer an example to illustrate this. After the completion of data generation I accidentally came across one of my participants who came up to me and asked me, in front of other people, about the progress of my work and the usefulness of her contributions. This was an awkward moment that uncovered an issue that I had not anticipated and which casted doubt on 'ethical practice': to what extent was I protecting her identity if I answered to her question? On the other hand, how could I avoid answering? Again, thinking 'on my feet' I decided that it was my participant's right to disclose her participation to anyone she wished to and I answered the question in a general way, without offering any details. This incident challenged me and required contemplation of 'situational ethics' (Flyvbjerg, 2001), rather than reliance on specific guidance. Upon reflection, I concluded that since *I was not initiating* the disclosure of my participants' identity, I was still honouring my commitment.

With regard to the second element of confidentiality, i.e. safeguarding participants' identities in presenting findings, potentially identifying information such as participants' prior studies, professions, mother tongue and nationality, were removed during transcription. In addition, the site of the research was also kept confidential. Given the small size of the counselling training field, disclosing the training establishment where this research took place would make participants easily identifiable. This was a difficult decision to make, as not being able to discuss the theoretical orientation through which participants practised or to comment on the institution's training philosophy and values and other context-specific details, necessarily 'decontextualises' findings 'from the unique places in which they occur' (Guenther, 2009, p. 418). Given this study's idiographic character, this was certainly a compromise; yet, safeguarding my participants' identity came first. That said, I am aware that despite my attempts to ensure confidentiality, readers familiar with the field of counsellor education in Britain could potentially deduct the identity of the training provider by details that cannot be concealed (Bondi, 2003b). To that end, I have acknowledged and discussed this possibility with my participants prior to providing consent.

At this point it is useful to highlight a distinction between what Tolich (2004) has described as internal and external confidentiality. While concealing the site of the research would prevent (to an extent) external readers of my research outputs from potentially identifying participants, it does not preclude participants from identifying their peers and perhaps participants' training providers and supervisors from recognising their students. As Tolich points out, 'potential breaches of confidentiality exist among a sample of informants who know each other' (2004, p. 105). This position was put forward also by Wiles and colleagues (2006), who pointed out that when research is conducted in a small community, details can be easily identified among peers. Indeed, the 'uniqueness of stories' (Tolich, 2004) as well as 'verbal mannerisms' (Wiles, et al., 2008) could make participants' identities evident to people who know the participants. The latter was particularly problematic in my study, as non-native participants' speech could potentially reveal their nationality, and given the small recruitment pool, their identity. Again, the possibility of 'internal confidentiality' being breached was discussed openly with participants.

As already hinted, further action to safeguard confidentiality was to refrain from revealing, and therefore exploring, participants' specific socio-cultural identities. These are disclosed only to the level of 'world regions' (Kissil, et al., 2012), that is, described as European, Asian and North American participants. As North American and European participants were white, this allowed the topic of 'visibility' of ethnic identities to emerge in data, while protecting participants' identity (there were two European, two Asian and four North American in the overall sample and even more in the pool from which I recruited). Similarly to the discussion around the site of the research, excluding references to specific countries of origin and native languages has been a compromise for the study and does not reflect any intention to ignore participants' diversity.

Overall, in order to handle confidentiality-related issues in an ethical manner, I took some additional actions: first, I designed the consent forms in a way that raises participants' awareness of these risks and secondly, offers participants the opportunity to remove specific contributions and/or culturally related information from their accounts. To ensure that participants were fully aware of the consequences

of their decision to participate (such as the impossibility of providing internal confidentiality) I discussed the matter further with participants in person, prior to the interview. Where there was a specific concern, I guaranteed that the relevant contribution would be removed from the transcript. This was often reflected in participants' hesitation around discussing client-related events rather than themselves being identified by readers of this research. This issue was readdressed in the writing up process of the thesis and especially the presentation of findings: in cases of particularly sensitive contributions or potentially identifiable identity traits, participants' pseudonyms were removed. Also, any references to specific clients have been homogenised in terms of gender (female) and foreign clients' nationalities have been either removed or generalized to 'world region' level (Kissil, et al., 2012), depending on the case and their function in the particular interpretations. Overall however, I have avoided referring to particular situations from participants' client work, or kept those to a minimum, retaining the focus on the therapist rather than the client.

The challenging nature of maintaining confidentiality is now evident. Next I explore a different ethical consideration, namely the presence and negotiation of power dynamics in research relationships. I have already referred to such processes earlier in this chapter, where I discussed my role as an interviewer. Here I include a more theoretical discussion on how I view power dynamics in research and offer an example that illuminates how I addressed such imbalances in this study.

Power dynamics in research interviews is a topic that has been widely discussed in social science research literature. In general, researchers working from a post-modern framework criticise hierarchies and aim to 'minimise the distance and separateness of researcher-participant relationships' (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009, p. 279). Naturally, researchers take different actions and aim to achieve different levels of 'minimisation' of imbalances, depending on the theoretical framework that they endorse. Through conducting this project, I came to agree with scholars who maintain that it is utopian to believe that research environments can become perfectly egalitarian (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2013; Kvale, 2006) and shifted towards a more Foucauldian position of viewing power as a

process that influences all interaction and not as something that someone possesses (Flyvbjerg, 2001) and therefore that can be neutralised. To that end, I reflected upon my own power and control over the research process but also took into consideration my participants' power over the material they shared (Kvale, 2006). Overall, reflection upon power dynamics is thought to safeguard ethical action (Bondi, 2003a, 2004; Gadd, 2004). One action that I took, however, to address power asymmetries was to adopt a 'process consent' strategy (McLeod, 1996; Silverman, 2010); according to this, participants were invited to give consent prior to the interview (to be audio recorded), just after (for contributions to be used) and were offered a copy of the transcript to have the opportunity to remove parts or the whole contribution at a later stage (Appendices). In addition, I offered a thank-you note (Appendices) and a summary of findings as a reciprocal action to participants' contributions (Abrahams, 2007).

The last theme that I want to discuss in relation to ethics is dual relationships, which falls into the broad sphere of attending to research relationships. Although I was not a friend (i.e. meeting regularly in social contexts) with any of the participants, some of the people I interviewed were part of my pre-existing network and others could potentially come across my path in different contexts. I already discussed the complexity of meeting a participant by chance outside the interviewing setting. Similarly, in cases where participants were likely to be present in the dissemination of my research findings (e.g. conferences), I notified them in advance, offering a copy of my talk to avoid surprise and/or reduce potential anxiety. The possibility of meeting my participants in social contexts has also raised concerns in relation to the amount of information participants were prepared to disclose. This, however, was a risk that I decided to take, as the fact that I am not a complete stranger could also facilitate the establishment of trust and hence lead to deeper explorations (McLeod, 1996). I will come back to this issue in chapter seven where I discuss limitations of this project. More importantly however, dual relationships might lead to an important ethical issue, namely coercive participation.

This issue has been tackled by scholars addressing the issue of power dynamics when conducting 'insider research', that is, when the researcher shares her participants'

characteristics, experiences, roles or identities, or when she conducts research in her own working environment (Malone, 2003; Paechter, 2013; Taylor, 2011; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). As mentioned earlier, counselling training in Britain is a small discipline and I may be familiar with some of my participants' teaching staff, colleagues, or them personally, a fact that might impede the voluntary character of participation. To reduce this possibility, I contacted participants directly (not via their course secretary or tutors) and emphasised the voluntary aspect of this project and its independence from their training programme. Nevertheless, I agree with Rossman (1984) and Malone (2003) that some aspects of participation are unavoidably coercive when conducting research in a familiar environment and when dual relationships are involved. Although I cannot guarantee that interviewees' participation was entirely voluntary, I can affirm that my actions were guided by this intention.

This last point can be generalised to all ethical issues that I discussed earlier and indeed to ones that I might not have identified here. While I have done my best to disguise participants' training institution, programme and identity, given the nature of the research project and the complexity of confidentiality issues, I cannot guarantee that I have done so in full. Similarly, while I have carefully avoided situations or behaviours that would harm my participants, I can never be sure that this has indeed been the case. I can however ensure that I informed my participants about inherent risks and sought further assistance and additional consent in cases where I felt it was needed. I have reflected upon my actions and processes and I have related to my participants with honesty and through respecting their experience (Bondi, 2003a, 2004; Finlay, 2012; Gadd, 2004). To conclude, ethical considerations can be 'marked by ambivalence, situated within actual experiences and understood as a "struggling with the self" but a struggle that must be shared publicly' (Clark & Sharf, 2007, p. 412). With that in mind, I have deliberately disclosed and discussed my confusion, difficulties and potential 'mishandlings' of situations, in an attempt to be transparent about dealing with ethics. This gives me the confidence to affirm that I have designed and conducted this project in an ethical manner, respecting the profession's principles and valuing the trust that participants have shown in me.

4.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter opened with a clarification of the use of the researcher's reflexivity in this thesis. Next, I presented this study's preliminary work and the rationale for evolving this into a more appropriate research design. I then offered details about recruitment and sampling processes and presented and justified the implemented methods for data generation and analysis. I concluded this chapter with a discussion of ethical considerations. In the following two chapters, I move on from research methods to research outcome and present findings from studies A and B respectively.

Chapter 5: Study A: Non-native Speaking Trainees' Experiences

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to presenting and discussing findings from Study A, which is based on the accounts of four non-native speaking female trainees, namely, Amy, Elena, Claire and Crystal. At the time of the interview, all participants worked towards a professional qualification in counselling, undertaking training at a higher education institution in Britain. Amy and Elena had accumulated nine months of clinical experience (working with clients), Claire seven and a half and Crystal seven months. The number of clients they saw as well as their placement sites varied. Regarding ethnicity, Amy and Elena are white European, while Claire and Crystal of Asian background.

The chapter consists of two sections: it begins with the presentation of findings, clustered in three super-ordinate themes. This section relies on participants' direct quotations, which include some codes of transcription, explained in the following table:

I: interviewer
A/E/C/C: initial letter of participant's pseudonym
word ... : small pause in speech (<3'')
word (number): seconds of pause in speech (>4'')
word- : interrupted speech
word in bold: emphasis in tone/voice
word [I:word]: simultaneous speech
(...): deliberate omission of text
[explanation]: removed/altered transcript for

confidentiality reasons

Table 5: Key to Transcription

The presentation of findings is followed by a discussion section, which entails four sub-sections: one discussion section for each super-ordinate theme and an overall discussion for study A. This division between findings and discussion was deliberate; to my mind, reading people's stories can be a relatively emotive and embodied experience, as opposed to making links to existing literature and theory, a more intellectual process. Therefore, this separation aims to facilitate the readers' immersion in my participants' accounts and promote understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in a holistic way.

Presentation of Findings

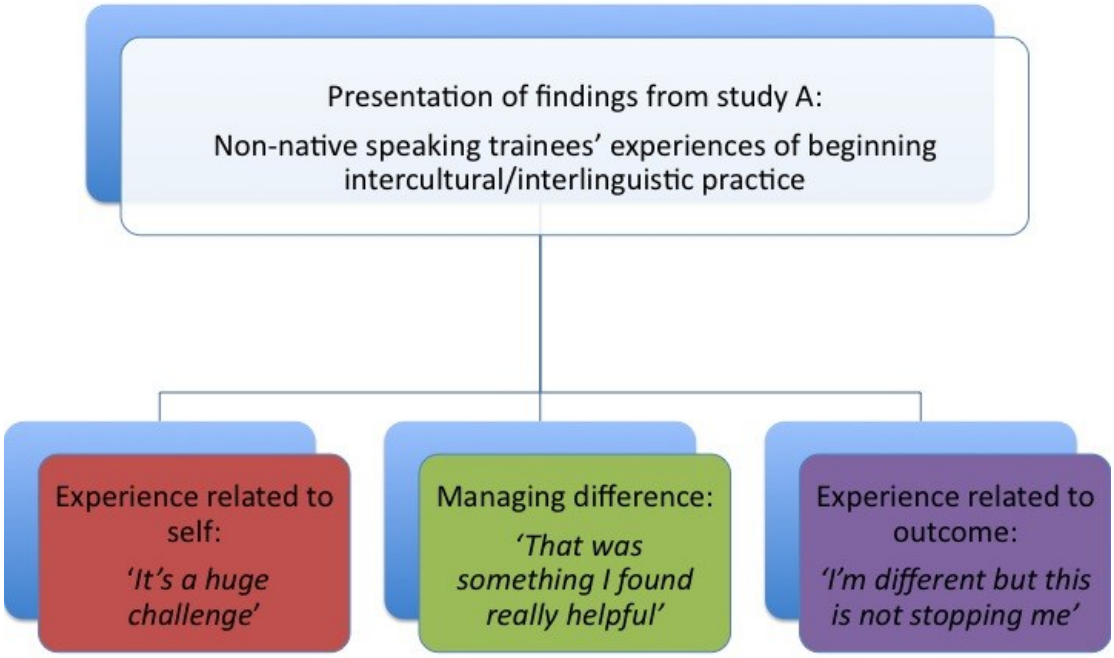


Figure 3: Super-ordinate themes for study A

Findings for study A consist of three super-ordinate themes, depicted above. The first, 'Experience related to self: *It's a huge challenge*' presents non-native speaking trainees' 'practical struggles' and the 'emotional impact' of those challenges on the self. The second super-ordinate theme, entitled 'Managing difference: *That was something I found really helpful'* presents participants' 'external sources of support' as well as their personal 'coping attitudes' in their effort to handle their difference in counselling practice. Finally, the third super-ordinate theme 'Experience related to outcome: *I'm different but this is not stopping me'* exhibits non-native speaking trainees' sense of 'self-efficacy' in practice, as well as the 'benefits' they identify in the phenomenon of intercultural practice. This super-ordinate theme closes with the master theme 'counselling goes beyond words', which reveals participants' sense-making of intercultural counselling practice.

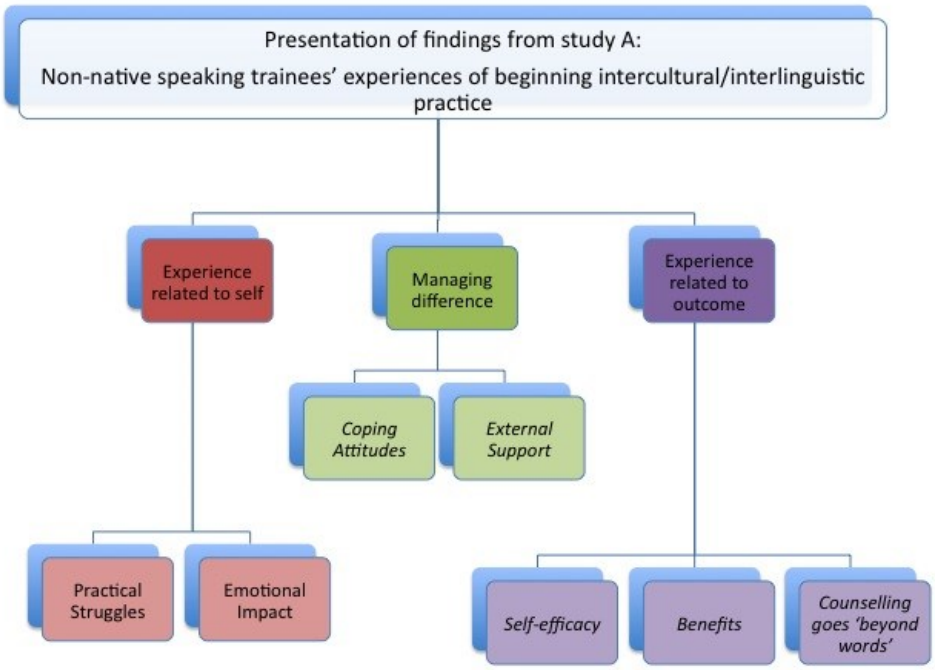


Figure 4: Super-ordinate and master themes for study A

The presentation of findings starts with super-ordinate theme 1 'experience related to self'.

5.2 Super-ordinate Theme 1: Experience Related to Self: 'It's a huge challenge'

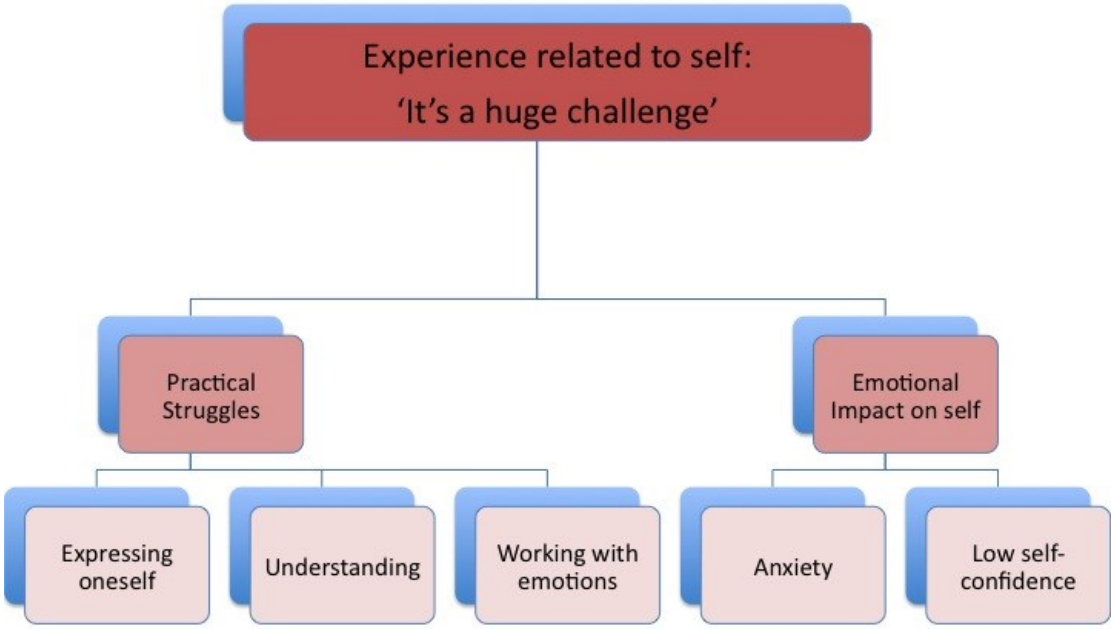


Figure 5: Super-ordinate theme 1, with master and sub-themes

5.2.1 Practical Struggles

One of the most prominent recurrent themes to come up in my interviews are the practical struggles that non-native speaking trainees disclosed in relation to practising in the UK. It is worth clarifying that the differentiation between practical and emotional struggles that prevails in this super-ordinate theme serves the purpose of facilitating the reader's understanding of participants' challenges, rather than mirroring participants' fractured experience.

Expressing oneself

The presentation of practical struggles begins with the difficulty of **expressing oneself** fluently and coherently in practice, which is present in all participants' interviews, constituting one of the most salient themes of non-native speaking trainees' experiences of intercultural practice. To begin with, Elena, when asked about her practice, notes that:

> *'sometimes of course it's difficult to find the right words and... sometimes I think that this is because it's not my language' (Elena, 190)*

This excerpt illustrates her difficulty in expressing herself accurately, to '*find the right words*', when working with clients. The use of the term '*of course'* reveals Elena's perception of the impact of her non-nativeness in self-expression as something natural and expected. This difficulty could be linked to a range of reasons, such as beginning anxiety or inexperience for example; nonetheless, Elena clarifies that it is linked to second language use ('*because it's not my language'*). At the same time, her contribution illustrates the randomness of this situation, an element that suggests also a hint of self-efficacy[19]: while *sometimes* she encounters problems with accuracy in self-expression, at others she does not.

Similarly, Crystal discloses:

> *'... there's that idea in my mind, but maybe because I don't have like a vocabulary... or I don't know how to organise it in a proper grammar then I will feel very difficult to express my self...' (Crystal, 253-5)*

Crystal's contribution offers her struggle to express her thoughts precisely ('*don't know how to organise it', 'feel very difficult to express'*) in her practice. Like Elena, she links this overtly to her non-nativeness *('I don't have a vocabulary'*,'*don't know how to organise it in proper grammar'*) pointing to the centrality of language use in the experience of intercultural practice. Finally, the fact that *'there is an idea'* in her

[19] A counsellor's self-estimates of performance (Larson, et al., 1992)

mind points to Crystal's self-efficacy, which is impeded by her language difference. The first two contributions indicate rather explicitly that participants linked self-expression difficulties with non-nativeness. In the following two cases participants do not make this explicit link, yet my understanding is that this struggle is common.

Amy, a participant who generally emphasised the positive aspect of her experience of intercultural practice, kept referring to the fact that she is a non-native speaker *as a weakness*. The following extract portrays the first time she mentions this word and my prompt to elaborate on this:

> *'...there's something about me being self-accepting [I:mhmm] of my weaknesses…*
>
> *I: weaknesses…?*
>
> *A: yeah, in terms of, you know, in terms of, not using the right words all the times, or in terms of finding difficult to pronounce certain words in certain way...' (Amy, 184-189)*

Amy has been discussing her self-efficacy and the significance of self-acceptance to achieve that. The choice of the word 'weaknesses' rather than 'difference' or 'non-nativeness' reveals how Amy makes sense of her linguistic difference. To my mind, having a weakness means lacking something, not being as adequate as one could be. To take this further, people who have 'weaknesses', may face difficulties in the effort to overcome them, experience similar to what has been described earlier in Elena's and Crystal's extracts. When I prompt Amy to elaborate on the choice of words, she makes this more evident: non-nativeness is a weakness because of the linguistic mistakes involved in her self-expression ('*not using the right words', 'pronouncing in a certain way'*). So the fact that she perceives her linguistic mistakes as 'weaknesses' is what makes me think that Amy may be encountering difficulties in expressing herself when practising in a second language.

Claire has approached this matter in a twofold way. First, although she does not mention overtly any struggles when *expressing* herself in practice (such as making linguistic mistakes), she identifies a reduced speed in her reactions.

> *'sometimes I cannot think... to respond it... to respond something to the client fast enough' (Claire, 125)*

Slowness in responses is somehow similar to not finding the 'right words' to express oneself; the result, anyway is analogous, as Claire struggles to respond in the same way as if she were not foreign. Like Elena, Claire's experience reveals a feature of randomness ('sometimes'), which also manifests an element of self-efficacy. Claire referred to her struggle with self-expression also with regard to her work with other foreign, non-native clients:

> *'C: Sometimes you know this word, but they don't know it... so how to explain it? (...) so, it's like, it's quite difficult, so if you talk to native English speaker, they know what it is and they can explain it [I:mhmm] in a easier way, which for me maybe I cannot, because I just know that ok, this word, means this way, but I cannot find it easier... what- to explain what it is*
>
> *I: I see what you mean*
>
> *C: Aha, so for me, yes, it is difficult, and also the accents as well.' (Claire, 219-28)*

Claire's reliance on her interlocutor's proficiency demonstrates that her imperfect command of the language generates some difficulties in self-expression in practice. Although she is competent in expressing herself ('*I just know that ok, this word, means this way'*), she finds it '*difficult'* to find alternative ways to explain herself, manifesting some difficulty of self-expression in practice due to her non-nativeness.

Understanding

The final lines of the preceding excerpt ('*the accents as well'*) introduce another type of practical struggle in participants' experience of intercultural practice, namely **understanding** their clients' verbal communications. Moving on from Claire's succinctly expressed experience (above) to Crystal who discussed this is in a more elaborated way:

> *'I feel I can... well sometimes I really feel difficult to understand my client, especially if they have like really strong accents... and that was very difficult....' (Crystal, 246-8)*

The beginning of the extract indicates Crystal's self-efficacy ('I can'), which is quickly complemented by her sporadic ('*sometimes'*) interrelated struggle to understand her clients' speech. This difficulty seems associated with her non-nativeness, but also intensified by her unfamiliarity with the local accent. This is a point that illuminates the interconnectedness between language and culture, revealing that linguistic difficulties are not purely related to linguistic elements (e.g. vocabulary, structure) but also to socio-cultural features. In short, Crystal's contribution sheds light on the interplay between non-nativeness and the particularities of the local use of language.

Elena does not appear to make the same connection:

> *'the reality is that I'm not British, and I* ***cannot*** *pretend that I am.... I can never never never pretend that I ehm I understand everything' (Elena, 274-5)*

Elena's account indicates her preoccupation with ethnic difference, which she views as an impediment to her ability to understand her clients. From her contribution it is difficult to know whether Elena refers to specific linguistic elements of speech (e.g. accent, vocabulary) or to a broader 'understanding' of her clients' contexts. For Elena, the fact that she is not '*British',* meaning that she does not belong to the same socio-cultural group as the majority of her clients, may be linked to her inability to fully understand them. There is an obvious element of permanence in Elena's sense-making of her different identity ('*I can never never never'*), which admittedly does not appear associated with any negative nuance, but as an acceptance of 'how things are'.

Amy reveals a slightly different experience in relation to her difference and understanding:

> *'Being you know an international student means that some things… for me, some expressions are quite literal, whereas the native speakers sometimes use them as… in a metaphorical sense' (Amy, 216-9).*

Amy does not disclose any difficulty with understanding the accents or the wider context but focuses on the literal meaning of words, reinforcing the

interconnectedness of language and culture. Her difficulty in understanding her clients is linked to language, but not to strictly linguistic elements as explained earlier. Rather, Amy encounters difficulties in understanding the message communicated by native speakers and associates this with the socio-cultural use of language, i.e. the literal or metaphorical use of words. This experience illuminates the significance of familiarity with the culture and the local use of language. This could manifest the more dynamic character that Amy attributes in her non-nativeness in comparison to Elena who appears convinced of the impossibility of change of her non-nativeness.

It becomes clear that from a strictly linguistic viewpoint, although the sub-theme 'expressing oneself' was clearly related to being a 'non-native speaker', 'understanding' reveals a more elaborated nature of non-nativeness that involves familiarity with culture as well. Second language use is of course responsible for part of participants' struggle to understand (e.g. due to unknown vocabulary or accent). Nonetheless, a clear link to familiarity with local use of language and culture seems to emerge from participants' accounts.

Working with emotions

Having discussed the practical struggles of 'expressing oneself' and 'understanding', this presentation of findings moves on to the next sub-theme, namely 'working with emotions'. This section includes themes related to the trainees' experiences of exploring their clients' emotional worlds in a second language. It is important however to make a clarification, related to this theme's 'recurrent nature'. Unlike the two previous themes, I deliberately introduced a discussion around emotion-related work with clients in a second language during the interviews. The rationale for this was to explore participants' emotional processing and expression in a second language, a topic that has been rather prominent in the literature around bilingualism and psychotherapy (chapter two). Although participants' experiences of working with clients at an emotional level are vivid and akin and therefore the *content* of the theme can be perceived as recurrent, it is important to stress that its general concept should not be understood as such.

Having clarified this, we can now proceed with the exploration of this theme. Participants' practical difficulties in exploring their clients' emotions in a second language are connected both to rigid linguistic features and a more general unfamiliarity with culture and local use of language.

Amy discussed this issue explicitly, expressing her difficulty to find the right words to name '*sensations*':

> *'...it's quite tricky to try to (....) get in touch with what they are experiencing (....) and then try on a different level to make that translation there. So I'm having that physical sensation in the room with my client (....) and then on a different level, at least in the beginning it was a struggle to try to name it.' (Amy, 255-62)*

At first sight the above excerpt seems similar to the difficulty that participants have noted with regards to expressing oneself ('*struggle to try to name it'*). Closer attention to Amy's words, however, helped me realise that there is a conceptually different element involved. The difficulty is not about not knowing or not finding the right words to describe a feeling (articulation); it is about empathising with the client ('*get in touch with what they are experiencing*') and *'on a different level'* translating this into a second language. When Rogers introduced the concept of empathic understanding he highlighted its twofold nature: on one hand the practitioner needs to be able to enter 'the private, perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it' (1975, p. 3), but at the same time be able to communicate this understanding in a successful way to the client. Amy's account reveals that being a non-native speaker perhaps impacts on one aspect of the counsellor's (perceived) ability to empathise, namely its successful communication to the client.

Elena has also expressed a similar experience, where to my understanding, she explains her difficulty, not to express her understanding but to *be very accurate* in her use of words:

> *'it's sometimes about "oh gosh, how can I say this, how can I?" it's not about reflecting back, because you can reflect back in a different way (...) but sometimes is the word is eh... ehmm "how can I say this now, how can I say something here that the client feels understood" ' (Elena, 183-7)*

Similarly to Amy, Elena does not find it hard to express herself ('*you can reflect back*'). The difficulty Elena describes is to articulate her understanding accurately (*'how can I say this now'*) in order to *communicate this successfully* to the client ('*that the client feels understood'*). Amy's and Elena's contributions illustrate the potential impact of second-language use on intercultural counselling practice by illuminating the effect on communicating empathy. This is also supported by Claire's experience, yet portrayed slightly differently.

Claire disclosed 'googling' and studying the meaning of 'feeling words' in English in order to enhance her linguistic proficiency in practice:

> *'...but some words that is (....) I haven't used it so I don't know what it is, so yes, I feel this is part of my ehmm obligation to know those words, those emotional, feeling words.' (Claire, 425-30)*

The above extract, clearly indicates her sense of duty to become more familiar with emotion-related words in order to fulfil her role as a counsellor ('*this is part of my ehmm obligation'*). This reveals her sense-making of the counsellor identity, which involves articulacy around emotion-related words. It is also interesting to pay attention to the phrase *'I haven't used it so I don't know'*, which potentially indicates Claire's process of acquiring the language through personal use, pointing to the significance of familiarity with the local use and acquisition of socio-cultural cues of a language. Her attitude of working towards improving her language proficiency as a sense of duty to her professional role reveals to some extent the struggle she encounters in understanding and articulating emotion-related words, even though this is not explicitly expressed in her account.

The following section moves away from the 'practical struggles' that participants discussed to the emotional impact that these had on them.

5.2.2 Emotional Impact on Self

Anxiety

Related to non-nativeness

Anxiety regarding clinical practice in a second language and culture is central to all participants' accounts, even though these interrelated fears may not have been realised in their actual practice (explored in super-ordinate theme 3). Participants' sources of anxiety are multiple, manifesting an interesting diversity of experience in relation to the same feeling (anxiety). When talking about anxiety, participants conveyed their experience in a very vivid manner, which involved alterations in pace and flow of speech, accompanied by gestures. This potentially demonstrates the intensity of intercultural practice-related anxiety and its significance to participants' overall experience. Unfortunately, many aspects of this vibrant representation may be lost in transcription.

The presentation of findings begins with Crystal's account. Crystal offers a powerful and insightful description of her anxiety generated by the fear of being perceived as incompetent or inadequate by clients:

> *'I feel... I don't feel so grounded [I:mhmm] there, and I will feel quite shaky and start to worry..."ok, how my client will perceive me that I'm not able to reflect back or I'm not able to well... speak properly, or fluently" ' (Crystal, 45-8)*

Crystal's anxiety is verbalised through description of her bodily experience ('*shaky', 'grounded'*) related to her non-nativeness, i.e. being inarticulate and inaccurate in her use of language. This demonstrates the connection between the practical struggles described in the previous section and the emotional impact on the self. Her physical description of feeling '*shaky'* and *'not grounded'* perhaps illustrates the intensity of this experience, illuminating its impact on Crystal. By listening to Crystal's experience, the image that came to my mind was that of a young child, trembling in anticipation of approval by an adult. This may explain why I interpreted Crystal's contribution as revealing a drop in her confidence, associated with someone else's presence. As Crystal discloses, this impact derives from an inner fear of being perceived as incompetent (*'how my client will perceive me'*) and ultimately fear of

potential rejection by the client, due to her non-nativeness (‘*not able to speak properly, or fluently’)*. Overall this extract indicates some connection to an awareness of power differential, between a powerful native speaking client and a potentially ‘disempowered’ non-native speaking therapist in training.

Claire’s contributions show a similar preoccupation:

> *‘so what I felt... what I kind of worried before is that I would be rejected by native English speakers’ (Claire, 234)*

> *‘...I decide not to ask what this word means when the client say [I:mhmm] because I don’t want to show that I don’t know it...’ (Claire, 241)*

These extracts denote directly (in the first case) and indirectly (in the second) Claire’s fear of rejection by clients and perhaps fear of ‘losing face’, pointing to the interrelated anxiety that this generates for her. Anxiety becomes evident when considering her reluctance to disclose lack of knowledge associated with her non-nativeness (not knowing the meaning of a word) in the fear of being perceived as incompetent and eventually rejected.

Claire’s experience is similar to Amy’s account. Amy also describes her anxiety as being linked to making linguistic or pronunciation mistakes:

> *‘you get some clients asking “what do you mean”,[I:mhmm] or “would you like to repeat that again” and there is that, you know, anxiety rising and you say “oh my gosh, wha wha wha… did I, I did not say the right thing?” ’ (Amy, 189-92)*

The repetition of *‘what’* and the restructuring of her question (‘*did I, I did*’) demonstrate the nervousness she may be experiencing when she re-plays the scene in her head during the interview. This indicates the intensity and significance of this feeling in Amy’s experience of interlinguistic counselling practice. This extract illustrates beautifully the immediacy of anxiety in the counselling room, an element that is also present in both Crystal and Claire’s accounts presented earlier. What is also evident here is the interconnection between the trainee’s anxiety and the client’s response. Amy’s response portrays that self-efficacy and awareness of performance

are directly linked to clients' reactions, underlining the uncertain and stressful nature of beginning intercultural practice. Unlike Crystal who was explicit in her explanation of reasons for anxiety, Amy's account does not explicate the source of her anxiety. In other words, why does 'not saying the right thing' generate anxiety for Amy? Other parts of the interview illuminate this point:

> *'I know for my self that I am quite perfectionistic in what I'm doing' (Amy, 577)*

> *'you want to be the perfect counsellor'(Amy, 582)*

These extracts support my understanding that Amy's anxiety is linked to her expectations *of appearing* competent, which entails an element of self-efficacy and satisfaction with the self rather than preoccupation with therapy outcome.

A slightly different type or aspect of anxiety can be found in Elena's account, who describes passionately how she feels when her linguistic difference impedes her understanding of a client's account. Her experience seems to be more linked to her anxiety of *not being facilitative for the clients* rather than her fear of being rejected by them.

> *'…and then you might need to ask, then the anxiety there is "oh gosh, I hope the person doesn't think misunderstood...doesn't feel... if I don't pick up every single thing" ' (Elena, 140-2)*

Looking at the linguistic elements again, Elena's anxiety can be understood by the use of direct speech 'oh gosh', the grammatical mistakes ('*think misunderstood'*) as well as her inability to find a proper word to finish her sentence ('*doesn't feel...'*). Moreover, the word 'need' possibly demonstrates Elena's reluctance to disclose lack of understanding, revealing a commonality of experience with Claire. The linguistic barrier 'forces' her to ask, a situation that causes anxiety. Although not explicit, this excerpt seems to refer more to an anxiety about being facilitative *for the client*, and not so much to the anxiety of being rejected or perceived as inadequate, revealing a more other-oriented sense-making of the interrelated difficulties of intercultural practice.

Until this point I have presented anxieties that were clearly linked to participants' linguistic difference. This has been because all four participants mentioned second-language use as a source of anxiety. To give justice to participants' experience however, some divergence is now addressed.

Related to ethnic difference

As explained in section 1 of the literature review, individuals' sense of belonging to a socio-cultural group is understood as their perceived ethnicity or their 'ethnic identity'[20] .

Claire was the only participant who appeared preoccupied with the visibility of her ethnicity and with being potentially perceived as incompetent by clients or rejected due to that. In her interview, this concern came up recurrently. As this experience was unique for Claire, I decided to include the following, representative quotation, to demonstrate how strongly she feels about this:

> *'that's my fear, how can I understand, the client? Kind of like that ... I mean, I fear that the client might think that "how do you understand me, you are from far away", like say "you are not Caucasian" ' (Claire, 293-5)*

In this short extract we witness Claire's anxiety about being from a visible ethnic minority group, manifested by the content of her contribution and its specific linguistic elements. For example, Claire starts by expressing 'her fear' around counselling efficacy due to her ethnic difference; she quickly clarifies that her real concern is related to how she will be perceived by her clients rather than self-doubt. It is difficult to know what led Claire to make that clarification. Does it represent her 'real' experience? Did she want to appear more confident or manifest self-efficacy? Does it reveal some type of internalised discriminatory position or belief, which upon realisation, gets censored? Even though I am not in a position to reach a conclusion on the real reasons behind this incoherence in Claire's contribution, based on my

[20] Although in chapter two I argued in favour of an inclusive use of the term 'identity' from a socio-cultural, linguistic framework, here I wish to emphasise Clare's sense of belonging to a visibly different ethnic group.

experience of interviewing her, I can say with certainty that the visibility of her ethnicity played an important role in her experience of intercultural practice and was associated with a great deal of anxiety.

Claire was not the only participant to talk about ethnicity in relation to anxiety. Elena, a white, European trainee linked her anxiety of being rejected by clients also belonging to a different cultural group

> *'there's a part of me when I'm with my clients thinking "oh gosh, I really hope the clients don't mind me being [nationality], don't mind me being from another country, I hope they just see me as a person" ' (Elena, 90-2)*

So although Claire highlights the visibility of her ethnicity as central to her intercultural practice-related anxiety, Elena's attributes a more general nuance to ethnic difference by emphasising the element of '*being from another country'*. As pointed out in the literature review section, the foreign trainees' visible difference is a matter that has been addressed in the relevant literature and lies beyond the focus of this thesis. For this reason, Claire's sense-making of being a 'minority ethnic' trainee will not be further investigated here.

Permanence of anxiety

In this sub-section I wish to note that the anxiety participants experience as a result of their linguistic and cultural difference from their clients, and the environment they practise in, appears to be commonly perceived as permanent. This does not necessarily mean that participants feel constantly anxious, but that some level of foreign-related concern impinges constantly on their experience.

The ever-present character of difference-related anxiety is evident in all participants' accounts. Elena for example states:

> *'I'm not [British], so there's a certain degree of anxiety there always' (Elena, 270).*

What is present but perhaps not entirely overt in this extract is that the permanence of anxiety is linked to the permanent character of trainees' difference and the perceived

impossibility of change. Elena feels that anxiety will always be present because she is not British and never will be. This perceived impossibility of change may be associated with different factors such as the fact that participants are new to the host country or they do not intend to stay for long and therefore cannot imagine being totally immersed in the host culture, nonetheless, it is part of how they make sense of their experience of intercultural practice.

Claire expresses a similar experience, but illuminates a different feature. She links her perceived permanence of anxiety to initial sessions with clients rather than to the enduring nature of her difference:

> *'I still have it... even though I kind of realise that it's just my own fear, but I still have that fear every time that I see the client... not every time that I* ***see*** *the client, but every time that I have initial sessions' (Claire, 277-280)*

This points to the fact that anxiety of being rejected may be specifically associated with the period prior to forming the therapeutic relationship. To conclude this section I present a metaphor from Crystal that demonstrates the permanence of anxiety. Crystal was the last participant I interviewed and she mentioned this metaphor at the very beginning of her interview. The image that she used resonated with me, as she managed to describe very accurately what the other three participants had mentioned in different ways. Her metaphor was also influential to the conceptualisation of this theme, namely permanence of anxiety.

> *'...normally I can kind of push it away about my language thing [I:mhmm] but it's like a big shadow always behind me so when I feel... when I feel... stuck then I will realise that shadow, it's like something make me feel darker... [I:mhmm] vulnerable... and... less settle' (Crystal, 553-6)*

This extract, I think, exhibits how much Crystal's (linguistic) difference influences her. It is 'like a big shadow': it is something significant and noticeable, following her wherever she goes, almost like haunting her (making her feel darker, vulnerable and less settled). I would suggest that the phrase 'it's like a big shadow always behind me' is a good example of what Smith calls a 'shining gem' i.e. 'a phrase that does

not need a lot of "detective" work to be recognised as it shines forth' (2011b, p. 6). This metaphor stands out and illuminates other participants' experiences as well.

Having presented the participants' struggles and their main fears related to their diversity, I now move on to the next sub-section of participants' 'emotional impact on self', namely 'low self-confidence'.

Low self-confidence

Being different, both linguistically and culturally, appears to have an impact on trainees' self-confidence. The passage of time plays a role in how trainees make sense of their abilities and therefore their confidence, with each participant experiencing this in a different way.

Crystal associates rather explicitly her low self-confidence to the practical challenges she faces in her practice due to being a non-native English speaker. This is present both when she struggles to express herself:

> *'So if I feel I'm less able to express my self, I'll feel lack of confidence' (Crystal, 568.)*

and when she cannot understand her clients:

> *'so at the moment if I can't understand it, the first thing is that I start to doubt my ability...' (Crystal 63-4)*

These extracts reveal an instantaneous cause and effect relationship between linguistic barriers and confidence, suggesting that practice-related self-confidence fluctuates according to performance. This reveals the instability of Crystal's experience.

Claire also disclosed being less confident because of being foreign and, in particular, visibly different. The following excerpt follows a discussion of Claire's fear that the client will be disappointed to see that their counsellor is an 'ethnic minority':

> *'lack of confidence, fear... I feel that I need to prove (....) in the beginning maybe I can use the word prove but now... it's not that strong any more coz I feel... I feel that ok... kind of have more*

> *confidence [I:mhmm] more than before but still not...ehmm fully confidence in my self' (Claire 348-53)*

It is interesting to note that although Claire's confidence appears to be enhanced by time and accumulation of clinical experience, the permanence and perceptibility of her difference restricts her from being 'fully confident'. This is analogous to the permanence of anxiety discussed earlier.

Amy unveils her low confidence indirectly, in the form of a contradiction of the coping strategies she uses to overcome the difficulties she encounters when she practises interculturally. The subsequent quote is contextualised in a discussion of how she uses humour in her practice and how this helps her be more relaxed, as opposed to:

> *'being overwhelmed with shame or stressed or anxiety "oh my gosh, I'm", you know, "I'm I'm not worthy as a counsellor I did a mistake and you know the world is going to end" ' (Amy, 490)*

The situation that Amy describes in opposition to what really happens in her practice offers a glimpse into her fears of worthlessness associated with non-nativeness. This exaggerated perception, alongside the anxiety she experiences (discussed earlier), suggests that in spite of using humour, Amy may still experience low self-confidence depending on her performance.

Elena also discusses self-confidence, but offers a fresh perspective on the topic, highlighting the relationship between familiarity with culture, anxiety and confidence:

> *'because I've been living in this country for some years now, so... that is worrying me less and less now, more confidence' (Elena, 67)*

For Elena, becoming familiar with the host culture through direct contact with it appears to be responsible for her heightened confidence and the decrease of her anxiety. Nonetheless, Elena does not consider herself fully confident yet, unveiling some level of emotional impact of her non-nativeness or foreignness on her self-confidence.

To conclude, although some participants may not have verbalised the fact that being foreign influenced their confidence negatively, they have conveyed this message indirectly by talking about gaining more confidence gradually (Elena) or finding ways to overcome their feelings of inadequacy (Amy).

5.2.3 Summary of Section

Overall, the first super-ordinate theme labelled 'Experience in relation to self: It's a huge challenge' depicted the practical struggles that non-native counselling trainees face when they practice interculturally, namely expressing oneself, understanding clients and working with emotions. Additionally, this section portrayed the emotional impact that these struggles and the overall experience of intercultural practice may have had on participants' selves, i.e. anxiety and low self-confidence. The next super-ordinate theme presents the elements that non-native participants found helpful in making sense and managing their foreignness and the consequent difference.

5.3 Super-ordinate Theme 2: Managing Difference: 'That was something I found really helpful'

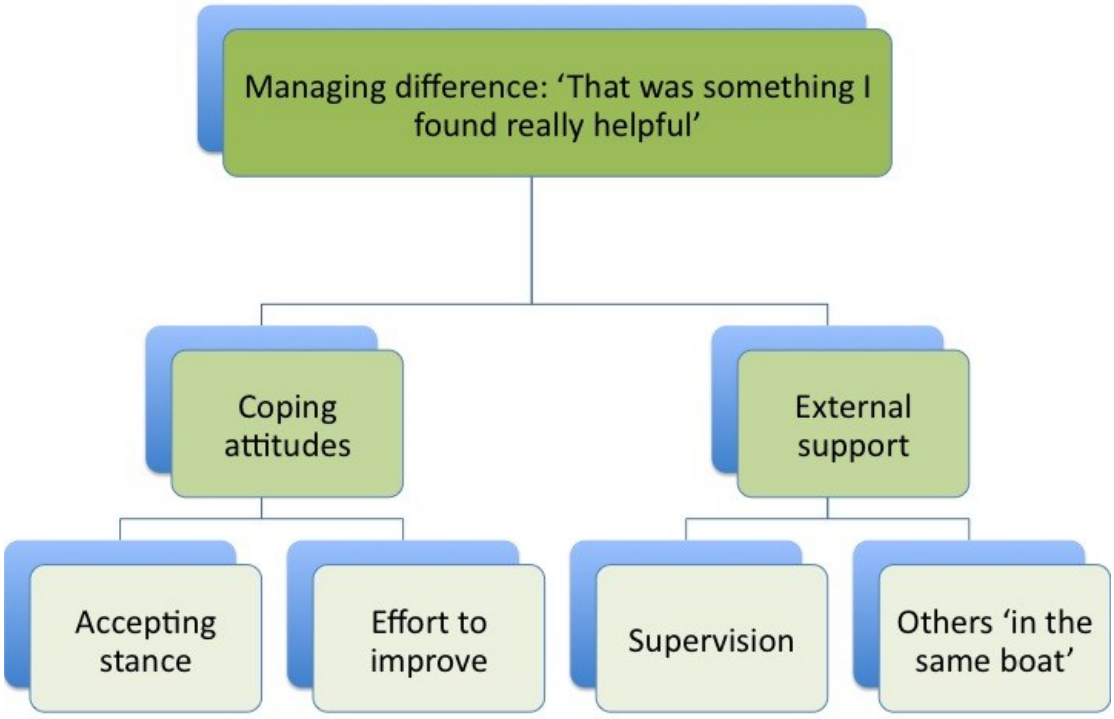


Figure 6: Super-ordinate theme 2, with master and sub-themes

5.3.1 Coping Attitudes

In this theme I discuss the personal coping attitudes that participants disclosed in relation to managing their difference in intercultural/interlinguistic practice. Two experiences have been indentified here, namely, developing a self-accepting stance and making an effort to improve oneself.

Accepting Stance

One of the most prominent recurrent themes in the area of coping with encountered difficulties was trainees' accepting stance towards difference. All participants apart

from Claire discussed their realisation that since it is impossible to change the fact that they are foreign, they need to accept their difference. I reached this understanding by attending to inconsistency in participants' accounts, rather than extracting this information directly from what participants said. Whereas participants often presented building a self-accepting stance as part of their personal development, particular moments in the interviews suggested that this might have not been entirely the case. These contributions suggest that acceptance may be a way of coping with foreignness-related anxiety. Although I acknowledge that participants' accepting attitude may well be associated with personal development, I emphasise its function as a coping strategy to illuminate the demanding character of international counselling trainees' experiences of practising across languages and cultures.

The extracts presented here demonstrate that trainees appear to adopt an accepting stance as a coping strategy to address the impossibility of changing their 'foreignness'.

Elena's account reveals that she cherishes her background (*'I don't want to pretend that I am British'*) and that she finds her difference beneficial for practice (*'I'm bringing something different in the relationship'*). In the following excerpt, however, it becomes clear that accepting her diversity is (perhaps also) a coping strategy for foreign-related anxiety:

> *'So the only way for me to be able to work, to be able to relax is to accept that that's not my language, that I'm not from this country....' (Elena, 21-2)*

> *'...the fact that I'm not British... I said, "either I have to accept this, or I will never work here" ' (Elena 110-13)*

Elena appears to perceive being foreign and non-native as a stress-provoking fact (*'to be able to relax'*) that would potentially be an obstacle in her practice ('*be able to work'*) and that acceptance functions as a fundamental coping strategy ('*the only way'*, '*either...or'*) for her practice. This elucidates the emotional impact of being a non-native speaking and foreign trainee in practice, discussed in super-ordinate theme 1.

Elena's experience is very similar to Amy's, who has also talked about cherishing her difference, generally emphasising the positive aspect of her being a foreign and non-native practitioner. In the following extract however, Amy discloses that accepting her difference has been a time-consuming process which resulted in reducing the anxiety that being foreign generated for her:

> *'...becoming more confident and more relaxed during the sessions... and only now (....) I've started to accept the fact that you know I'm not going to become* [removed region] *soon and that I'm not going to be able to become a native speaker soon...' (Amy, 133-5)*

So for Amy too, accepting the permanent character of her difference ('*not going to become* []*/native speaker soon'*) can be understood as a coping strategy through which she gains confidence and eases the being foreign-related anxiety. Again, low-self confidence and its dependence on others' reactions or feedback have been discussed above. Similarly, the uncertain and anxiety-provoking character of this phenomenon has also been pointed out, rendering participants' need of finding a way to cope with these issues easy to understand. The double presence of the word '*soon'* in Amy's account, indicates her sense-making of 'foreignness' as associated with familiarity with the host culture and language. This reveals a different perspective on difference than Elena, who explicitly expressed her belief in the permanence of 'foreignness'.

Crystal's account also divulges that acceptance of difference is mainly related to coping with the anxiety of being foreign:

> *'so the only thing I can do is just accept I'm not a native speaker and-* ***try*** *to accept that I am not a native speaker (....) and try to persuade my self...mhmm... so when I do get stuck again then I'll think "ok I got stuck, that's me" and I try to accept it and keep going' (Crystal 529-532)*

It is worth noticing Crystal's correction in the first two lines: initially she discloses that acceptance is her only option since she cannot change the fact that she is foreign. The emphasised (in her tone) use of the verb '***try'*** shows that accepting one's non-nativeness is not necessarily easy. An element that seems associated with this is

difficulty in accepting imperfection in a counselling role. This is then corroborated by the phrase '*try to persuade'* indicating again the difficulty that accepting one's difference might incorporate. This small detail illuminates how challenging the experience of non-native trainees is and, linking back to the first super-ordinate theme, facilitates understanding of how demanding even identifying and making use of coping strategies may be.

Divergence: Effort to improve

Although acceptance was the way that most participants chose to deal with their difference and the difficulty or anxiety that this was evoking, Claire had a different experience which I wish to highlight, namely improving her English proficiency. This reveals a far more active stance in addressing difference, which may be linked to Claire's overall diverse experience of 'foreignness' (significance of visibility of ethnicity).

As mentioned earlier, Claire used the Internet to improve her English proficiency ('*I just googled it and printed out that, you know, googled feeling words'*) and asked native speakers for explanations or clarifications ('*I ask a friend who is native English speaker'*, '*I asked the receptionist the swear words'*). Claire stated that by doing this, she aims to enhance her performance ('*it's good for work'*) and become a more competent practitioner ('*I have a duty to know these words'*). Claire also mentioned that the effort to improve her linguistic proficiency is an activity that she enjoys doing, regardless of the benefit that this has for her practice *('it's not (...) a burden thing that I must do it, but I also enjoy knowing').*

Without wishing to dismiss the 'truth' of Claire's experience, I have identified elements in her speech that suggest that this effort may conceal also a strategy of coping with her being foreign-related anxiety. In other words, while I accept that for her improving her English is indeed an enjoyable activity that enhances her practice, I suggest that it is also a way of dealing with her stress-generating difference.

To understand this, we need to stress again the different attitude that Claire holds in relation to her difference. As described earlier, the other three participants

experienced being non-native and foreign as a rather permanent situation (even for Amy becoming native and native speaker is only a possibility in the far future). Claire on the other hand, exhibited a more active stance: she perceived her *linguistic* diversity as something that could be changed, as opposed to the permanent character of her ethnicity. Although she cannot do anything to change the fact that she 'looks different', by improving her English she can decrease the negative stereotype that she perceives as associated with her ethnicity. My understanding of this derives from the following extract where she discusses her mum's reaction to Claire's decision to train as a counsellor abroad:

> *'so what she was worried and told me and maybe this is what I worry as well, is that "will they trust you?" Like, it's kind of difficult you know white people will trust minority group, or Asian... because we are, like I told you, we are inferior ehm that is the stereotype... ehm so... she knows that I need to work so hard to... to work in this field which uses English a lot so actually she said that "don't play facebook, don't- in [language of origin], **don't have** [country of origin] **friends** so you can use English as much as possible" ' (Claire, 549-55)*

Through her mother's opinion, Claire expresses her own sense-making (*'this is what I worry as well'*) about her difference: since Westerners perceive her (due to her Asian ethnicity) as inferior, she needs to work hard on the aspect that she *can* change, i.e. language, to try and reverse the negative stereotype that follows the aspect that she *cannot* change, the visibility of her ethnicity. To take this analysis a step further, her mother's rather strong advice to use English to the maximum *('don't have [country of origin] friends'*) could have been internalised and consequently perceived as a subjective experience ('*It's not a burden... I also enjoy'*).

5.3.2 External Support

Until this point we saw two ways that participants use to manage the 'being foreign'-related anxiety. These methods, acceptance and improvement of language proficiency, are both related to the trainees themselves and therefore I consider them as 'coping attitudes'. In addition to these, participants often spoke about external support that they received and how facilitative this was for their practice and self.

Supervision

A main source of external support that participants mentioned was 'supervision'. My participants did not always distinguish between clinical supervisors and academic tutors in their contributions and therefore I am using the word 'supervisor' inclusively.

There is a paradox related to the theme of 'supervision'. While it was a recurrent theme, participants' contributions do not entail elements of enthusiasm or intensity in relation to that source of support. Put differently, although participants mentioned receiving support and finding supervision helpful, this was done in a rather 'flat' way. I will attempt to explain this phenomenon in the discussion section at the end of this chapter. It may, however, be useful at this point to recall the beginning phase that participants were at in terms of the counsellor's developmental journey, which may be linked to this tendency.

For example, Crystal mentions her supervision *as a proof* of how significant the issue of being a non-native speaking trainee is for her, revealing the centrality that supervision has in her training process:

> *'I do feel it's like, it's a really important issue for me, and I also disclosed this in my supervision...' (Crystal, 520).*

Similarly, Elena values the support she receives in supervision, as it is the first coping strategy she mentions when she discusses how she manages her struggles:

> *'I do bring to supervision and I do bring this to a personal...therapy and... at... at my training as well'. (Elena, 366)*

Amy's account is probably the one that most highlights the significance of supervision, but as we can see the description is not especially vivid:

> *'I have a really supportive supervisor that was really I mean there for me at the times where I felt I wasn't doing a great job, or when I felt that I was making mistakes (....) help me into becoming more confident and more relaxed during the sessions' (Amy, 123-132)*

Amy's contribution uncovers the support she received from her supervisor in moments of self-doubt ('*I felt I wasn't doing a great job', 'making mistakes'*) and how this relationship advanced her self-confidence but also her stance ('*relaxed'*) during practice.

Overall, it is evident that supervision was identified as a source of support in participants' accounts. The fact that it appeared in a rather lacklustre way however, perplexed my analysis: was this a central theme in non-native speaking trainees' experience? Should it have a place in this presentation of findings? On reflection, I decided that a short inclusion of this theme followed by a discussion of its complexity would be more informative than its complete removal.

Apart from formal supervision, participants mentioned another type of 'external support', namely 'others in the same boat'.

Others 'in the same boat'

As it became clear from Elena's account, supervision was not the only type of external support that participants mentioned as helpful in their coping processes. Elena for example mentioned her personal therapy as an alternative source of external support ('*I do bring this to personal therapy'*). Since personal therapy did not come up in other interviews, and it does not seem to have a salient role in Elena's experience it is not further explored here. What Elena emphasises though, is the importance of sharing her concerns and difficulties with her peers and particularly with other non-native speaking peers:

> *'I discuss these things with different people ehm for instance in my course (....) there [is] another person who is from another country, from- or we are non-native speakers basically. And so sometimes I talk to this person, and it helps that you don't feel that different, you don't feel... yeah, the only one' (Elena, 367-372)*

Elena's contribution highlights several interesting things. First of all, the significance of linguistic difference as an aspect of 'foreignness'. This becomes clear from the correction in her speech: first, she refers to a peer *'who is from another country'* and then narrows this down to the shared experience of being non-native speakers,

elucidating once more the role that language plays in the process of negotiating or making sense of one's identity. Moreover, she discloses that talking to a person with whom she shares the experience of being a non-native speaker facilitates a desired sense of belonging. I think that overall, this excerpt manifests the importance of emphasising language as an aspect of difference rather than researching international counselling trainees' experiences of training in general

The other three participants did not explicitly mention talking with other foreign peers from their training programmes, but with foreigners in general. This might be the result of people not having access to other foreigners in their programmes, not having had the chance to discuss these issues with them, preferring to discuss difficulties with friends etc. Regardless, the shared experience of 'being a non-native speaker' seems to provide support for international counselling trainees in this study. For example, Claire mentions:

> *'I also ask my [country of origin] friend as well, if she find it difficult to talk to...' (Claire, 216)*

The fact that Claire describes actively asking her friend whether she also encounters difficulties in her interactions in a second language reveals Claire's need to feel like she is not the only one struggling, that there are other non-native speaking people facing similar difficulties to hers.

Amy has also expressed an interest in comparing her experience to others', but she does not disclose having done so in a face-to-face interaction with someone she knows. She would be interested however to search the literature and relate her situation to others':

> *'I'm saying "ok, this is my experience but, what other people are saying about it?" I mean, can I find a book or, an article published, where I can you know, try to compare my experience with a different experience...' (Amy, 643-5)*

The fact that Amy does not mention the opportunity to discuss this with a non-native peer or friend but instead expresses an interest in comparing her experience with scholarly work is indeed interesting and I regret not having followed it up during the

interview. Nonetheless, both Amy's and Claire's examples make a connection to Elena's initial idea of deriving support from sharing her experience with other non-native speaking peers.

The final participant, Crystal, disclosed a slightly different experience. She discussed receiving support from native speaking peers, but she did not find this particularly helpful:

> *'when I feel hard to express myself, my language is not enough **for me** [I:mhmm] so it's not like people say "oh you are fine" and then I'm fine' (Crystal 129-30)*

Crystal makes a very salient point here. She argues that at the moments where she struggles with linguistic imperfection, receiving reassurance about her language proficiency by native speakers is not facilitative. Although not explicit, perhaps what Crystal means here is that rather than receiving reassurance about her skills and efficacy, she wants the struggle she encounters to be heard. Similarly, when Crystal brought this issue to peer-supervision (where most of her colleagues are native), she did not receive the attention and support she was seeking:

> *'and I talked in group supervision, we have individual and group supervision...ehmm I can't remember... my colleagues didn't respond a lot' (Crystal 524)*

So although not expressed overtly, my understanding of Crystal's experience is that she is left unsatisfied and unsupported due to the absence of what the other three participants were talking about: reassurance that other people face similar difficulties.

5.3.3 Summary of Section

The second super-ordinate theme, namely 'Managing Difference: that was something I found really helpful' presented participants' ways of dealing with difference and foreign-related anxiety. In particular it presented participants' personal stance and attitudes towards their difference but also their external sources of support such as supervision and discussions with other non-native speaking trainees. The third and

final super-ordinate theme presents non-native speaking trainees' experiences related to client encounters and therapeutic outcome.

5.4 Super-ordinate Theme 3: Experience Related to Outcome: 'I'm different but this is not stopping me'

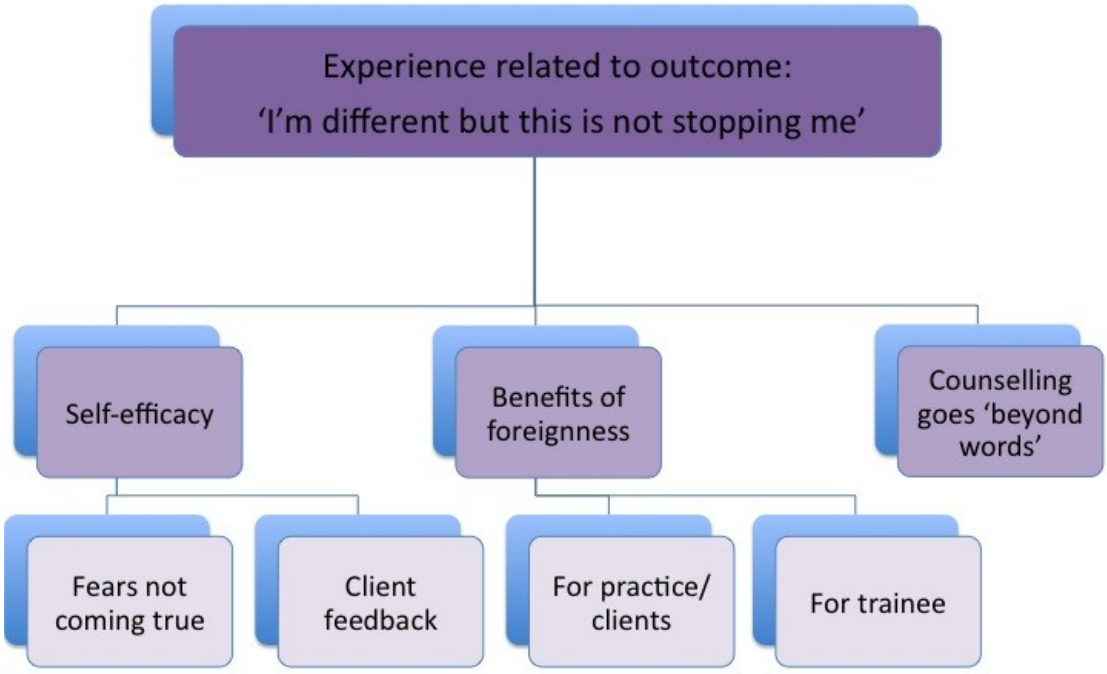


Figure 7: Super-ordinate theme 3, with master and sub-themes

5.4.1 Self-Efficacy

Despite the difficulties that trainees face when they practise interculturally and across languages, there is overall agreement among participants that their competence in practice is not significantly affected by their difference. Put differently, whereas

practising in a foreign linguistic and cultural environment is challenging, it does not appear to influence foreign counselling trainees' perceived competence.

This theme is introduced by Elena, who commented passionately on her self-efficacy:

> *'you can still say things, you can still pick up things, you might not say things in the **perfect** way... but you can still... I...I am able... to reflect back, I'm able to say things in my own way... and for them to fee- for my clients to feel understood, or to feel that I've actually been empathic' (Elena 225-228)*

Elena's contribution portrays how she makes sense of her difference in relation to practice. It is interesting to note the change from second person singular *('you'*) to first (*'I'*) in this extract. In my view, this portrays Elena's shift from a general position of expressing an understanding of 'shared experience of non-nativeness in practice' to a more personal understanding of *self*-efficacy, which derives from the specific experience she has accumulated through her interaction with clients. This is the key to this theme. The interaction with clients entails two interrelated elements: a more general realisation that practice-related fears do not come true, and specific positive feedback from the clients. These two sub-themes refer to the same phenomenon but are presented separately as they emphasise on one hand an inner process (realisation of fears not coming true) and on the other an external intersubjective experience (feedback).

Fears not coming true

As discussed extensively in the first super-ordinate theme, participants experience a great deal of anxiety, associated with their fears of inadequacy and rejection by clients. While these fears are present and influence trainees' experience of intercultural practice, they are very rarely confirmed in the actual interactions with clients. Elena discloses how her fears of rejection were never substantiated:

> *'then my fear was that they would not ehmm be willing.. yes, to..to. work with me for thinking that "oh she's not from this country, she might not be able to understand me" if it makes sense. But that was just **my** fear, because it's no- it's not happening' (Elena, 104-7)*

Elena's contribution reveals the realisation of how she projected her fears onto her clients and the role that seeing clients played in facilitating this understanding. To my mind, her choice of tenses, shifting from past (was) to present continuous (not happening), illuminates the 'currentness' of this realisation for Elena, elucidating the novice phase that my participants were in but also the direct link between her experience with clients and her sense-making of the potential impact of her difference.

Similarly, Claire describes how her fear of being rejected by clients was not confirmed by her actual experience:

> *'so what I felt... what I kind of worried before is that I would be rejected by native English speakers, but it turns out that "oh no!" ' (Claire, 233-5)*

Written language limits the transmission of surprise in Claire's voice when she articulated the above phrase, an element that points to her conviction that her difference would be a problem in intercultural practice. Although Claire uses the term 'native English speakers' to describe her clients, the next extract indicates that Claire refers to 'white' people instead. It is interesting to note that for Claire, the fact that clients have never rejected her until now does not convince her that her difference passes as unnoticeable. In moments of '*thinking negatively'* it crosses her mind that clients:

> *'maybe they are too polite to say it... (6'') the client is too polite to say that "can I change the counsellor to the... the other white one?" ' (Claire, 362)*

This thought depicts the intensity of Claire's preoccupation with being a minority ethnic trainee: even though she has never had an experience of actual discrimination in her practice, her internalised stigma feeds her suspicion about clients' real intentions. Nevertheless, in terms of perceiving herself as adequate to practise, she explicitly states that she does not consider her difference to be an obstacle, illuminating her self-efficacy:

> *'so listening to the client is not a problem, it's not that huge problem...' (Claire, 619)*

Crystal also identified that the anxiety she experiences in relation to her foreignness is mostly linked to the way she perceives herself and is not corroborated by her actual counselling practice experience:

> *'it's about my expectations but it's not how I perform because I ... I really have really good experience working with my clients [I:mhmm] and language wasn't the issue...' (Crystal, 136-9)*

Crystal points out that 'in reality', practising in a second language has not impeded in any way her ability to be competent. She underlines her 'expectations' about her 'performance' as central to her being-foreign-related anxiety, but also stresses that her actual performance did not confirm her fears. This final extract introduces the second subtheme of this category, namely clients' direct reactions and feedback that participants have faced and that was mainly positive, consequently resulting in the sense of competence described at the beginning of this super-ordinate theme.

Client feedback

The way clients responded to trainees' difference is the other component that led to participants' feelings of self-efficacy. Whereas in the previous sub-section findings portrayed trainees' fears of inadequacy or rejection by clients not taking place, in this theme the discussion focuses on the actual feedback that trainees received from their clients, as well as clients' reactions to difference, both of which were mostly positive. The difference between fears not coming true and clients' feedback is subtle, yet significant: the first case depicts a more passive situation of gradually reaching a realisation, while the second involves the clients' active response to difference and, consequently, the trainees' sense-making of that reaction.

Starting with Amy's experience, she discloses that, as time passed, she started feeling that her clients trusted her despite her difference and linguistic imperfection (*'...it felt to me as if the people who were referred to me started...I mean trusting me'*). Even though at points clients were correcting her linguistic mistakes or clarifying their understanding, this was not perceived negatively:

> *'they can tolerate that frustration [of her making mistakes] and they can come back to me saying "you didn't use the right word there" or… "what did you mean?". So, that doesn't hinder the process, I can work well...' (Amy, 299-301)*

Amy appears to speak from a position where relationships with clients have been established, allowing for this bond to be challenged when misunderstandings take place due to linguistic barriers. This will be discussed further in the final sub-section of this super-ordinate theme, namely 'counselling goes beyond words'. At the same time, Amy's affirming tone ('*that doesn't hinder... I can work*') reveals confidence, which, in my view, derives from specific accumulated positive experience with clients. This confidence is not in line with Amy's in-session experience of being corrected by a client presented earlier ('*and there is that, you know, anxiety rising and you say 'oh my gosh', wha wha wha… did I, I did not say the right thing'*). To my mind this incoherence exhibits Amy's multifaceted experience in relation to intercultural practice: on one hand, at a rational level she is aware that she is competent in her work, confirmed through her actual experience, and on the other, she is still worried about her difference. This twofold experience will be discussed further in the discussion section as it characterises participants' overall stance portrayed in the two 'diametrical' super-ordinate themes 'experience related to self' and 'experience related to practice'.

Elena also spoke about the positive experience of feedback from her clients, which feeds her self-efficacy. There are two elements in Elena's account related to that: first she talks about specific feedback that she received about her competence as a practitioner ('*she gave me a brilliant feedback, an excellent feedback*). Secondly, she discusses clients appreciating her congruence and being comfortable with being different in the relationship:

> *'clients appreciate this [being open about difference] because it's not about where you come from or what you do it's about who you are in the relationship (....) so far I've had a very good experience' (Elena, 118-20)*

> *'the way they respond to me sometimes, makes me believe that actually they are understanding and they feel understood' (Elena, 230)*

What may initially seem as 'expert talk' ('*it's not about where you come from... it's about who you are')* becomes authenticated through Elena's disclosure of 'actual' experience *('I've had a very good experience').* Having said that, the phrase 'so far' adds an element of uncertainty to this contribution, demonstrating a slightly different experience from Amy's confident stance presented earlier. The second extract portrays the direct confirmation that she obtains from her clients when she checks her understanding or communicates empathy to them, despite the linguistic mistakes that her speech may incorporate, exposing once more self-efficacy.

In a similar way, Claire's experience of seeing clients has also been positive with regard to her being a non-native speaking practitioner. Whenever she checks her understanding or asks for clarification, clients are willing to provide further explanations:

> *'Some times I ask like what it is... like to check and the clients explain it and the client doesn't seem like "oh you don't know it" or something like that, you know? The client kind of "it is this way or it's... this is the meaning of it" or kind of like that, so they are willing to explain' (Claire, 245-8)*

Finally Crystal, who did not disclose specific examples of clients' positive comments or reactions, expressed receiving a rather positive attitude *('it seems that my clients [are] always very friendly to me'*), which supported her overall sense of competence:

> *'I haven't felt that...it's affecting my work so much, my clients seem able... they are able to understand me and I'm able to understand my clients' (Crystal, 52-4)*

But even when, due to the linguistic barrier, there is a communication breakdown, her experience is also positive, as clients offer further explanations, corroborating Claire's account discussed earlier:

> *'and they will know I can't really understand what they mean, so they will try to explain more... so... actually I feel it's fine...' (Crystal, 58)*

To conclude, the theme 'self-efficacy' makes apparent that despite trainees' anxiety about being inadequate or rejected in their practice, their actual interactions with

clients nourish self-efficacy. This highlights the intersubjective nature of experience, that is, the interconnectedness between the inner (fear) and outer (practice), or simply between self and other.

The second section of this super-ordinate theme is related to the beneficial aspect that participants were able to identify in the fact that they were non-native speakers and foreigners.

5.4.2 Benefits of Foreignness

Up to this point we saw that all participants consider themselves to be competent in their practice, offering help to clients in spite of the challenges they face due to being foreign and non-native speakers. In addition to this general feeling of efficacy, participants identified also foreignness-related benefits for their practice and self.

All participants disclosed at least one advantage of being foreign or non-native without any initiation of this discussion on my part. These advantages can be grouped as those that are beneficial for counselling practice and/or clients and those that benefit the trainee. This categorisation facilitates the presentation of findings without wishing to suggest that these areas (practice, client, trainee) are disconnected from each other.

Benefits for practice and clients

One of the advantages that participants identify as related to diversity is the **facilitation or enhancement of the clients' process**. According to the trainees in this study, working with a foreign therapist can facilitate clients' self-awareness and connection with feelings and consequently progress in therapy. This was manifested in diverse ways across the interviews. Amy for example, through her experience of intercultural practice came to realise that the therapist's difference can facilitate clients to examine their own attitude towards diversity:

> *'[my difference] invites the client to go deeper into their experience and perhaps become more aware of the cultural stereotypes that might be inherent in the expression they used' (Amy, 223-6)*

In her experience, her linguistic imperfection and cultural difference sometimes led to misunderstandings and the need for further clarifications. This has proven helpful for the client to become more conscious of the 'cultural stereotypes' inherent in their speech. Amy's use of the word 'stereotypes' here is not very clear, i.e. it is not evident whether she has a particular interaction in mind where a 'cultural stereotype' was negotiated after a misunderstanding or whether she uses this word to refer to cultural nuances intrinsic in native speakers' language use. Elena's account substantiates the position put forward by Amy.

Elena discovered that her difference could be seen as '*enriching*' for the client's life and personality in general. In her experience, her foreignness brings '*something different in the relationship'* and facilitates clients to:

> *'think about their own differences and diversities while... outside there, and accepting different realities...you know? In their own lives as well' (Elena, 294)*

Elena suggests that the therapist's difference can promote clients' awareness of difference, and enhance their ability to acknowledge and accept difference both in the therapeutic encounter and beyond. This suggests that intercultural counselling can facilitate individuals' intercultural competencies at a wider context. In addition to the transformation that this encounter can have at a level of openness towards diversity, Elena also points out that having a culturally and linguistically different practitioner gives clients the opportunity to pay attention to what they say and take responsibility for the accurate communication of their feelings and thoughts:

> *'...getting things wrong, sometimes helps them to get things right, if it makes sense? Because if I say something that's wrong, then it helps them to say, "no, that's not right, that's the way I'm feeling" ' (Elena, 192-5)*

So for Elena, misunderstandings caused by her difference and particularly by her linguistic imperfection, give an opportunity to clients to process their feelings further and take responsibility for their accurate communication, promoting self-awareness.

Claire discusses a very similar element in her experience and also interprets it as an advantage, suggesting that asking for clarifications allow clients to think more about their feelings and refine their understanding or perception of their emotional state. As the particular example that Claire disclosed was linked to a potentially identifiable client encounter, I refrain from presenting that contribution to protect both Claire and her client's anonymity. Instead, I cite the continuation of this extract where this experience is transformed into a more general belief:

> *'sometimes we just say some word and we don't get in touch with the meaning of it... so when the client kind of explains what it is or give the example of it, it seems that the client will have like a clear image or clear like... the client can feel it, not just think about it' (Claire, 266-269)*

The end of Claire's contribution introduces a new aspect of the beneficial character of the intercultural encounter: asking for clarifications as a result of interlinguistic or intercultural misunderstandings facilitates the client to move from a cognitive processing of experiences and feelings *('think about it'*) to a more experiential one *('the client can feel it'*). So Elena, Claire and Amy have all put forward the idea that the therapist's foreignness and the interrelated miscommunications that this may entail, facilitates the client's emotional processing, experience and expression.

The next advantage for clients and practice that participants identified in relation to their foreignness was **the connection with foreign clients**. Participants in this study suggest that finding a practitioner with whom one shares an experience (such as being non-native or being from a different country) can be helpful for some clients to feel connected. In Elena's case the fact that she is foreign helped clients who had lived abroad relate to her and feel understood and accepted:

> *'some people lived in other countries and they actually feel really understood by me, that's the sense I have because (....) having someone like me, who comes from another culture, and who has an understanding of the challenges of living in another country, is ehm feels good for them' (Elena, 303-6)*

Elena does not provide specific examples of how the fact that her clients *'feel really understood'* was substantiated in her practice. Nonetheless, Elena expresses an

understanding about her clients' process (*'sense I have'*) with such an unusual (for Elena) confident tone ('*they actually feel really understood', 'feel good for them'*). To my mind, this manifests that she has reached this realisation through concrete discussions and experiences with clients that she does not disclose for different reasons (e.g. protecting her clients' confidentiality).

Crystal also worked with clients who were non-native speakers. She discloses that these clients perceived their relationship with a non-native therapist very positively, as they felt understood, relaxed and facilitated:

> *'I can understand them- their situation better. Like I have- they made me feel [it's] better [to] work with me as well (....) so they feel more relaxed in the sessions and... because I have- I work with them to find the words so it's also about I have the ability to kind of help them as well...' (Crystal, 610-4)*

Crystal puts forward two facilitative skills that a non-native foreign practitioner may have for non-native speaking clients: a better understanding of the position they find themselves in (shared experience), and practical assistance in expressing themselves accurately. Although the identification of advantages entails an element of comparison, the word 'better' at the beginning of the extract indicates Crystal's rather direct self-comparison with native-speaking or domestic practitioners.

On the other hand, Claire expressed the same belief, i.e. that her foreignness would help her '*connect'* better with foreign clients, without however confirming this with a specific client-experience. The following extract is a lively representation of what Claire thought when she found out she would work with a foreigner:

> *'part of me felt kind of relieved that... ok, you might understand me because you don't use it... you are not native... and I'm not native... so maybe...there is like a connection or... we understand each other' (Claire, 154-6)*

The reference to her sense of *'relief'* portrays Claire's non-nativeness-related anxiety. Accordingly, the phrase '*you might understand me'* (referring to her non-native client) demonstrates the struggle with being potentially rejected, 'not understood' by her client.

The final beneficial aspect that participants identified for clients and counselling practice is the **curiosity and the absence of bias** that being foreign generates about the host culture and 'its people', a desirable counsellor attitude that counsellors seek to cultivate in their training.

Amy for example mentioned that she is more open to understand the client without taking '*perhaps many things for granted'*. As she lacks knowledge of the '*set of experiences related to that context and related to that word*' she is able to establish '*all the connections **with** the client'*. Likewise, Elena states that she does not '*have preconceptions because I am not from here...and I am actually quite curious'*. So being foreign facilitates a lack of biases and a stance of genuine curiosity, an element significant for counselling practice. Having said that, it is interesting to note that Amy has more than once referred to being 'forced' to denounce her 'expert role' because of her difference. According to her:

> *'there's something about being vulnerable in the presence of the client and not assuming that role of the authority, you know the person that never makes mistakes or never misunderstands...' (Amy, 348-51)*

Although Amy expressed this last theme as beneficial for the client (realising that the therapist is not perfect), it introduces us to the second subtheme of this section, namely the positive impact of being foreign on the trainees themselves. As suggested earlier, the two subthemes are interrelated: when the trainee is benefitted, their practice is enhanced and the clients are advantaged as well.

Benefit for trainees

As we saw above, Amy suggests that losing the 'expert mask' in counselling practice can be beneficial for the client as it helps them take responsibility for their progress and be in charge of their therapy. Even though Amy did not particularly comment on this, her contribution seem to imply that 'being vulnerable in the presence of a client' can be an important lesson for the counsellor in training. This is illuminated in Elena's case, where she associated this overtly with the trainee's **enhancement of self-awareness:**

> *'it's right to even make mistakes, which for me was a bi-...it's a huge challenge because I'm, I was the type of person that didn't like to make any mistakes, I want to be perfect and now accepting that I'm not perfect, I can make mistakes but... it's important to recognise that...' (Elena 144-6)*

Elena divulges the significance of the realisation and acceptance of not being perfect in a counsellor role. It is worth noticing the constant change of tenses in Elena's speech *('was', 'is', 'I'm', 'I was', 'didn't like', 'I want', 'accepting'),* potentially revealing the developmental nature of this process, which seems to be still ongoing for her. So being a non-native or culturally diverse practitioner assists the progress of realising that one is not perfect and builds up the trainees' maturity as well as self-consciousness of competence and limitations.

An idea similar to this was also present in Amy's account. Although Amy did not refer to realising her limitations, she spoke about the positive influence that being different has had on her personal development and advancement of self-awareness:

> *'...allows me to see things from a vantage point, and reflect more upon my... you know my agenda in the session, and not taking things for granted... So more...not doubting, but being more curious* ***about me****...' (Amy, 625)*

What Amy suggests here is that being a non-native speaker and culturally diverse practitioner directs her to reflect more upon herself in general and her actions as a practitioner in particular. She mentions the concept of 'self-doubt' but quickly alters that expression to an enhanced curiosity about herself. Due to her use of English as a second language, it is hard to comment on whether this interesting choice of word is a result of an underlying tension (doubting her abilities), or whether this reference is merely a result of non-nativeness and limited or unavailable vocabulary.

To conclude, all participants referred to advantages that they identified in their linguistic and cultural difference from the environment they practice in, in relation to their practice, their clients and themselves. In the following section I present how participants make sense of their bilingualism in practice.

5.4.3 Counselling Goes 'Beyond Words'

The final section of this super-ordinate theme and of the overall presentation of recurrent themes is linked to 'experience related to outcome' as it presents and discusses participants' sense-making of second-language use in relation to counselling practice. Similar to the first super-ordinate theme, this section emphasises particularly the linguistic aspect of trainees' difference.

Participants' experience led them to the conclusion that second-language use in practice was not associated with inadequacy and we already saw the elements that supported this realisation (fears not coming true and direct feedback from clients). But as we will see in this section, this feeling of efficacy extended beyond their skills and their role as a practitioner. There was something about counselling practice itself that was 'untouched' by the difficulties that second language-use involved in communication. This perception is articulated by Amy who states that:

> *'I have a sense that counselling is something beyond that...beyond the verbal… yes, I mean yeah, it is* ***talking therapy*** *so you get to talk, but there is something more than that...' (Amy, 313)*

So although language is essential in counselling, as it is the fundamental tool with which communication takes place ('*it is talking therapy'),* not possessing it at a native-like level is not experienced as an obstacle because counselling '*is something more than that'*. The aspects that participants identified as being 'beyond words' were associated with **empathic understanding** and the uniqueness of the **therapeutic relationship**. As participants' references to those elements are often interwoven, this section does not follow a two-subtheme structure but a more idiographic one, presenting each participant's case individually.

Crystal disclosed that, according to her experience, her ability to empathically understand her clients is not restricted to mere verbal communication. As a consequence, she is able to empathise with them and communicate this successfully despite the difficulties she encounters in understanding her clients' words and expressing herself accurately:

> *'I empathise my clients more from the facial expression, or I just look at their eyes or at...at the atmosphere, body language... it's more about- I kind of understand them from... other aspects of communication (...) It's also about what I've listened, but it's more about the feeling, something deeper and behind the language' (Crystal, 283-310)*

For Crystal, her ability to empathically understand her clients is not limited to a perfect comprehension of the words they utter. Empathic understanding involves more complex processes of communication, i.e. paying attention to the clients' facial expressions and body language, as well as the atmosphere in the room. In addition to the verbal communication Crystal refers to a *'feeling'* that is *'deeper and behind the language'*, pointing to something substantial in the intercultural interaction that is difficult to describe with words. Crystal goes on to explain that her ability to empathise with her clients depends less on verbal communication and more on that '*feeling'* that she described, as time passes:

> *'so I feel that I can kind of understand my clients well as we work… long enough... **together** long enough...' (Crystal, 252)*

Crystal clarifies that the positive impact of time on therapeutic practice is associated with a mutual effort between client and therapist *('together')* and does not rely simply on other aspects influenced by time such as improved counselling skills or confidence etc. The significance of establishing a rapport with the client, that is, building a therapeutic relationship, is present in all participants' accounts. Amy notes that in her experience, the establishment of a good therapeutic relationship is the element that makes counselling work, in spite of the difficulties that second language use involves:

> *'even if you don't get the right emotion, if you don't get the right word, if you have a good enough relationship with your client they will be able to take it forward then, they will be able to tell you "mmm, I'm not sure if that was anger, perhaps it was **that** emotion" ' (Amy 273-7)*

This is similar to the situation described earlier in 'benefits for the client', where participants identified the therapist's linguistic imperfection as facilitating the client's awareness of feelings. Here, reference to a similar phenomenon, i.e. the non-

native therapist offering an inaccurate reflection of the client's feeling, is seen through a different lens. The above excerpt highlights that for this phenomenon to take place, there is a need for *'a good enough relationship with your client'*. This means that effective client-therapist rapport is established regardless of the existence of linguistic diversity in intercultural counselling. In other words, Amy's experience suggests that the therapist's linguistic imperfection does not impede the building of a good therapeutic relationship. The same position is put forward in Elena's account:

> *'if you are empathic and even if you don't say exactly the right word, the right thing, sometimes it doesn't matter...' (Elena, 207)*

While Elena and Amy suggest that the therapist's linguistic imperfection does not impact negatively on the therapeutic relationship, Claire's contribution illuminates an important detail in this phenomenon. Claire partly agrees with the notion that the therapist's linguistic imperfection is not detrimental to therapeutic outcome. However, whereas Crystal and Amy refer only to the phase where the therapeutic relationship is established, Claire underlines the salience of the counsellor's ability to communicate empathy successfully to the client for this rapport to be formed. Therefore for Claire, language and particularly second-language use does '*affect the therapeutic relationship when it is in a stage of forming*'. In the following excerpt she explains why:

> *'because I believe that to form a therapeutic relationship, you need to show that you can empathise the client, right? And the way to show it is by language' (Claire, 387)*

Claire raises an important point, which seems to be overlooked by the other two participants: although linguistic imperfection does not impede the process once the therapeutic relationship is established, good language use is essential for the building of trust at the beginning of the intercultural encounter and the formation of a therapeutic relationship. This belief-like statement derives from Claire's experience of a client asking for a native-speaking counsellor *'to communicate easier'* after a couple of sessions with Claire. So Claire's experience points out that the non-native counsellor needs to demonstrate good-enough linguistic proficiency to demonstrate

her ability to understand and communicate this successfully to the client, which in its turn leads to building of trust, and the formation of a therapeutic relationship.

5.4.4 Summary of Section

This third super-ordinate theme entitled 'Experience related to outcome: I'm different but this is not stopping me' pointed out non-native speaking participants' self-efficacy despite the difficulties they encounter. In addition, this section depicted participants' diverse perceived benefits of intercultural practice but also highlighted their understanding of counselling as something that 'goes beyond words'.

This theme has concluded this first section of chapter five, namely the presentation of findings. The following section consists of the respective discussions of the above-mentioned super-ordinate themes.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, findings from study A are juxtaposed to existing scholarly material. As pointed out in chapter two, the relevant literature and research on international counselling trainees' experiences of practice is limited; as a consequence, the following work is also fairly restricted. Findings are discussed mainly in relation to existing literature on counselling trainees and international students, to the few studies on international counselling trainees, alongside references to immigrant (bilingual) therapists' accounts. Similarities and differences are highlighted alongside any particularities, to demonstrate the study's significance and its contribution to knowledge. As stated in chapter two, this study is contextualised within the field of counsellor education in a globalised world. Thus, it draws from and contributes to the literature on multicultural counsellor training and to the wider field of intercultural counselling. This contribution will be elaborated in chapter seven, where findings from studies A and B are brought together and explored jointly in the light of the overall phenomenon of intercultural practice and in relation to counsellor education and bilingualism's impact on self, areas identified as relevant in chapter two. In this

chapter discussion remains idiographic, focused on the particularities of the specific phenomenon under investigation.

5.5 Experience Related to Self: 'It's a huge challenge'

The first super-ordinate theme of study A, namely 'Experience related to self: '*It's a huge challenge'* presents the challenges that non-native trainees identify in their experience of practising interculturally/interlinguistically. The content of this super-ordinate theme follows the general tendency of literature on counselling trainees' (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003) and international counselling trainees' experiences of training (Ilhan, et al., 2012; Ng & Smith, 2009) to emphasise foreignness-related challenges. In particular, this super-ordinate theme illuminates the struggles that participants encounter in relation to practising in a second language and culture, pointing to practical difficulties and the emotional impact of those on participants. I wish to highlight once more that this division (struggles-emotional impact) serves the purpose of presenting findings; participants' accounts manifest that their experiences were interwoven, revealing the multifaceted nature of intercultural practice-associated challenges.

Starting with the practical challenges, participants disclosed facing several language-related difficulties in their practice. This corroborates findings from studies on international students irrespective of discipline of study, who encounter difficulties in communication and academia (Chen, 1999; Lewthwaite, 1996; Russell, et al., 2008), but also international counselling trainees (Ilhan, et al., 2012; Morris & Lee, 2004; Ng & Smith, 2009) and immigrant therapists (Barreto, 2013; Karamat Ali, 2004), who report communication problems associated with language barriers in counselling practice. Existing findings, however, and particularly in the field of counselling training, lack richness of subjective experiences. For example, Kariotaki (2013), a non-native speaking counselling trainee, reveals her difficulty in being articulate and succinct in her interactions with clients, but focuses on therapeutic outcome rather than her own process. Similarly, a participant in Ilhan et al.'s (2012) study, briefly states that she 'had problems in areas such as expressing myself and counseling [clients] because of language problems' (2012, p. 64) but does not elaborate. The

idiographic nature of the current study elucidates this general position, and advances the relevant literature by offering rich details on the specifics of ICTs' language-related struggles: participants disclosed difficulties with expressing themselves accurately and articulately, responding to clients in a timely manner, having an accented speech and understanding their clients, both due to linguistic factors (accents, vocabulary), but also socio-cultural ones (unfamiliarity with culture).

Participants also discussed struggling with a particular element of counselling practice, namely working with their clients' emotions. Specifically, they disclosed a difficulty in 'experiencing a sensation', or what is referred to in the counselling literature as a 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1969, 1996), and then translating it in a second language, and being accurate in the communication of feelings or exploration of the client's emotional state because of language barriers. To some extent, these findings are in line with the wider literature on bilingualism and emotional expression both in the field of linguistics (Dewaele, 2010; Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko, 2005) and psychotherapy (Amati-Mehler, et al., 1990; Clauss, 1998; de Zulueta, 1995) that maintain that second language use may impede a bilingual's ability to express emotions accurately. However, my participants explicitly point out that second language use-difficulties in emotion-related work are encountered only at a communicative level and are not associated with difficulties in experiencing and processing emotions. As findings in super-ordinate theme 3 indicate, participants' use of English is not emotionally-detached; they are able to empathically understand their clients and bond with them. Therefore, the literature's suggestion that second language use is associated with lower emotional resonance and detachment from emotion does not appear to be confirmed by bilingual trainees' experiences of working with clients at an emotional level. This divergence may be related to a different conceptualisation of emotions in general and 'affective processing' in particular between the different fields. As explained in chapter two, existing literature appears to put forward an understanding of emotions and affective processing as linguistically-based; on the contrary, participants in this study understand emotional work as an embodied process that may use language as a tool of communication but that does not rely entirely on it in order to take place. This

position is reinforced by the final master theme of super-ordinate theme 3, namely 'counselling goes beyond words'. The finding that second language use does not seem to obstruct the ability to do emotional work is particularly useful for counselling practice and demonstrates clearly the relevance of idiographic, qualitative research when researching subjective experiences (Smith, et al., 2009) in the field of social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2001), but also when conducting research on practice-related professions such as counselling and psychotherapy (Carr, et al., 2011; Dunne, 2011).

Moving on to the emotional impact of intercultural/interlinguistic practice on the self, non-native speakers disclose a lot of foreignness-related anxiety. In most cases, anxiety is associated with linguistic barriers and performance in a foreign language, supporting findings from previous studies on international counselling trainees (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Morris & Lee, 2004; Ng & Smith, 2009) and international students in general (Chen, 1999). While second-language anxiety is commonly identified in the relevant literature, it is rarely explored in depth. My findings provide interesting details on different sources of anxiety for trainees, such as fear of being perceived as inadequate, fear of impeding the client's process and self-expectations, features that are not present in other work due to the lack of idiography. The intensity with which participants described their intercultural practice-related anxiety corroborates the notion that counselling training is a demanding and stressful process in general (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Truell, 2001), and for international students in particular (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Morris & Lee, 2004; Pattison, 2003), pointing to the necessity to conduct further research in that direction.

Practical struggles and anxiety are interrelated with another aspect of participants' experience of intercultural practice, namely low self-confidence. Low self-confidence, feelings of incompetence (Thériault & Gazzola, 2008) and self doubt (Orlinsky, Rønnestad, et al., 2005) are commonly identified features in novice counsellors, as the developing practitioner self is still vulnerable (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003) and largely depending on external evaluation or feedback from supervisors, peers and tutors, as well as experiences with real clients (Bischoff, et al., 2002; Daniels & Larson, 2001; Lee, et al., 2001). However, my findings point out

that in the case of international trainees, external validation is not only sought in relation to counselling skills and practice, but also with regard to linguistic performance and difference. This elucidates findings from comparative studies between domestic and international students, which exhibit that the latter group experiences considerably more difficulties in all aspects of counselling training (academic, clinical, relational) than their domestic counterparts (Ng & Smith, 2009). My findings may provide a further explanation to this situation: it is possible that international trainees encounter more challenges and experience more anxiety because their foreignness renders more uncertain not only their 'performance', but also others' reactions to difference. As Imberti (2007) pointed out, individuals' statuses are often determined by linguistic criteria; lack of linguistic proficiency is commonly perceived as a sign of low education, an element that may be in contrast with efficacy in a professional role. To conclude, findings in this theme reveal that the already stressful nature of counselling training and beginning counselling practice may become exacerbated by cultural and linguistic difference.

Apart from the language-related challenges, findings also illuminate challenges related to ethnicity and cultural difference, with one participant underlining the significance of the visibility of ethnicity in her experience of intercultural practice. As explained in the literature review section, the experience of 'being a minority ethnic trainee' is not at the core of this investigation. Nevertheless, the idiographic nature of this project calls for attention to aspects that are central to each participant's experience; IPA aims to illuminate divergence, as long as it does not obscure the focus of the study (Smith, et al., 2009). Claire's experience, while divergent for this sample, is in agreement with the wider literature on minority ethnic counselling trainees (Henfield, et al., 2011; McNeill, et al., 1995; Watson, 2006), international counselling trainees in general (Mittal & Wieling, 2006), as well as immigrant therapists (Kissil, et al., 2013) who stress the centrality of 'overt differences in self' in their experiences. Overall, Claire's experience confirms the common position that being a minority ethnic practitioner generates a great deal of anxiety and impacts negatively on self-confidence. A uniqueness of my findings lies in the fact that the other 'visibly' minority ethnic trainee, Crystal, did not identify

any related experiences in her account, not even when the discussion revolved around her Asian ethnicity. Although it could be possible that Crystal may be avoiding this subject, it can also be suggested that the visibility of her ethnicity may not be central to her experience. Taking up the position introduced in chapter two about features of identity becoming more or less prominent depending on the situation (Ibrahim, 2011), it can be suggested that for Crystal, beginning counselling practice may have been perceived as a language-intensive task, due to the specific difficulties she faced or feedback she received; as a consequence, her 'non-native' aspect of identity became more salient than the visibility of her ethnic identity. This demonstrates that experiences of minority ethnic trainees may vary significantly among different individuals, inviting more detailed, idiographic research in this area that will allow divergence to emerge.

To summarise, the first super-ordinate theme 'experience related to self: it's a huge challenge' is in general agreement with the limited existing literature on novice counsellors, international counselling trainees, and the impact of bilingualism and foreignness on communication and the self. It advances these bodies of literature by offering in-depth explorations of subjective experiences of a group of international counselling trainees and therefore opening a window into the difficulties of beginning intercultural practice. That said, findings from this theme also challenge the existing literature on bilingualism and emotional expression. As stated, bilingual practitioners in this study are able to process, understand and connect to their clients' emotional worlds, in spite of the existing literature's suggestions of decreased ability for affective processing in a second language. This points to the usefulness of researching similar phenomena from diverse perspectives and disseminating findings across disciplines, but also highlights the relational character of psychotherapy and the embodied processes that this entails at its core.

5.6 Managing Difference: 'That was something I found really helpful'

The second super-ordinate theme of study A, 'Managing difference', presents findings that illustrate how non-native trainees handle or cope with the difficulties they encounter in relation to beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. These experiences have been clustered under two groups, namely coping attitudes (related to self) and external support (related to others).

With regard to coping attitudes, findings suggest that international counselling trainees in this study develop an *accepting stance* as a way of dealing with foreignness-related anxiety. Although the literature points consensually to the multiple struggles that ICTs encounter in training (Ilhan, et al., 2012; Ng, 2006; Ng & Smith, 2009) and the overall demanding character of counselling training in general (Orlinsky, Rønnestad, et al., 2005; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003), there is little attention paid to the coping strategies that trainees adopt to manage their struggles. Mittal and Wieling's study is an exception; the authors point out three 'strategies that helped international students to cope' in multicultural training (being a culturally diverse trainee), namely, 'learning to be more confident', 'learning to stand up for one's self' and 'having perseverance (nonquitting attitude)' (Mittal & Wieling, 2006, p. 380). The coping attitudes identified in my study, namely, acceptance of difference and effort to improve, can be seen as analogous to Mittal and Wieling's (2006) enhancement of confidence and perseverance respectively. Overall, they depict foreign counselling trainees' 'work on self' (McLeod, 2009) as being interrelated to their foreignness and non-nativeness. This will be elaborated in chapter seven in the section where I discuss implications for training.

Moving beyond the literature on ICTs and looking into the wider literature on intercultural competence and communication, it becomes clear that acceptance of difference is one of the phases that culturally diverse individuals tend to go through in their process of adaptation (Bennett, 1986; Sue & Sue, 2012). Accordingly, literature on international students' (not counselling trainees) help-seeking

behaviours also point to active strategies such as acquiring additional skills and talking to others to improve learning (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Leong & Sedlacek, 1986). In that light, my findings suggest that non-native counselling trainees in this study go through the same internal processes as other foreign individuals who try to manage their difference, pointing to a universality of managing foreignness and difference in a host culture.

The second master theme of super-ordinate theme 2 identifies the external sources of support that participants noted, namely supervision and peer support from other foreigners. As suggested earlier, an interesting feature of this theme is participants' minimal reference to supervisory support for matters of cultural difference. This element unveils different possibilities. To begin with, it is useful to keep in mind that 'counsellors at different degrees of experience and maturity have different supervision needs' (McLeod, 2009, p. 648). As a consequence, the beginning phase that participants were in at the time of the interview, may make them view the supervisor as an assessor rather than a source of support and choose not to discuss these struggles with her to avoid potential negative evaluation (Farber, 2006; Mehr, et al., 2010). Accordingly, perhaps participants conceptualise supervision as a source of learning and 'refining of skills and techniques' (Dryden, 1994b, p. 16) and not as the place to discuss personal issues (Ladany & Melincoff, 1999). That said, all participants seemed positively inclined towards their supervisors at this early stage of practice development (although my study did not explore participants' experiences of or satisfaction with supervision). Trainees' choice to refer only briefly to the use of supervision as a source of support may not necessarily be linked to avoidance, non-disclosure or disappointment as suggested in other studies (Ng & Smith, 2012; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). It may demonstrate that supervisory support is taken for granted and when interviewed, participants choose to discuss elements that they perceive as unique to their experience. Moreover, the research design, interview schedule and my reactions to participants' contributions may have also hinted at my interest in counselling practice rather than supervision experiences, restricting participants' elaboration on the latter theme.

Findings demonstrate that participants sought foreignness-related external support in other non-native speakers, manifesting the importance of discussing personal struggles with people who share the demanding nature of non-nativeness. The remarkable impact of second language use on individuals' lives and sense of self has been stressed by literature on the experience of bilingualism in general (Burck, 2005; Hoffman, 1991), bilingualism in the therapeutic environment (Amati-Mehler, et al., 1990; Clauss, 1998; de Zulueta, 1995), international students irrespective of area of study (Chen, 1999; Lewthwaite, 1996; Russell, et al., 2010) and international counselling trainees in particular (Morris & Lee, 2004; Ng & Smith, 2009). What has not been discussed in detail in these bodies of literature is the significance of peer support in this demanding situation. Mittal and Wieling's study makes that connection: their findings show that trainees experience comfort in the presence of other international peers, from having the opportunity to 'share struggles, validate each other, and share information [about] how to overcome them' (2006, p. 376). This is very much in line with the experiences of the four participants in my study. Similarly, studies on international students' help-seeking attitudes point to the importance of the presence of other international students (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Leong & Sedlacek, 1986) stressing the commonality of the experience of studying abroad irrespective of field. Finally, discussing with other foreigners is considered facilitative not only for students and trainees, but also more experienced immigrant therapists (Kissil, et al., 2013). This demonstrates that sharing a common practice-related struggle is useful regardless of the phase of professional development, pointing to the pertinence of research on (early) intercultural practice to the wider population of practitioners.

To summarise, in this subsection I discussed participants' ways of seeking external help and dealing personally with their difference as well as how findings relate to existing literature and research. Findings point to the centrality of endorsing an accepting stance towards one's own difference and the importance of sharing these concerns with people who are 'in the same boat'. They also point to the different use of supervision among practitioners at different developmental phases and feed to literature in this interrelated area. Finally, as coping-behaviours and facilitative

features have not been particularly explored in existing studies within the counselling field, this theme adds to the relevant literature as a whole and offers specific suggestions for training (discussed in chapter seven).

5.7 Experience Related to Outcome: 'I'm different but this is not stopping me'

The final super-ordinate theme, namely 'I'm different but this is not stopping me' presented participants' experiences of intercultural counselling practice in relation to clients and outcome, as opposed to the first super-ordinate theme that focused on experiences of the same phenomenon but in relation to the self.

The first master theme in this section, self-efficacy, reveals participants' positive attitude towards their practice, a finding also present in Ng and Smith's (2009) study on international counselling trainees. Findings in my study demonstrate that soon after starting seeing clients, trainees realise that their fears were exaggerated by uncertainty; *'having been there'* appears to reduce anxiety, pointing to the developmental nature of counselling training and practice, as well as the gradual building of practitioner-confidence, as suggested by the relevant literature (Orlinsky, Rønnestad, et al., 2005; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Actual experiences with clients, and specific positive feedback from these encounters seem to hold a central position in foreign trainees' formation of self-efficacy. This underlines the intersubjectivity of perceived adequacy in practice, corroborating findings from studies that point to the potentially detrimental character of negative feedback and/or experiences with clients for the novice counsellor's confidence and self-efficacy (Bischoff, et al., 2002; Daniels & Larson, 2001; Folkes-Skinner, et al., 2010; Lee, et al., 2001; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Turner, et al., 2008). My study adds to this literature by pointing to the positive aspect of this same phenomenon, that is, by demonstrating that positive feedback and therapeutic outcome can boost foreign trainees' confidence and reduce intercultural counselling practice-related anxiety. Naturally, positive feedback and client outcome cannot be anticipated or guaranteed; trainees need to go through their own 'baptism of fire' (Folkes-Skinner, et al., 2010).

Similar to the concept of receiving support from people 'in the same boat' discussed earlier, knowledge that (some) foreign trainees' experiences of practice are ultimately positive despite the challenges encountered, can be useful to trainees, trainers, supervisors and clients involved in intercultural counselling. This last point will be discussed further in chapter seven in the section 'implications for training'.

The second master theme, 'benefits of foreignness', puts forward the idea that international counselling trainees not only consider themselves competent in intercultural practice, but also identify advantages of this phenomenon. Unlike other studies that look at hindering and facilitating factors in intercultural practice (Smith & Ng, 2009), I deliberately refrained from initiating questions on advantages and disadvantages of intercultural practice during data collection to avoid restricting my participants' thought in this binary way. Still, all participants referred to advantages of being a non-native speaking practitioner.

Participants' inclination to identify advantages in this demanding situation follows non-native practitioners' (not trainees) tendency to discuss beneficial aspects of their difference, as pointed out in chapter two. For example, Jimenez (2004) highlighted that he was able to offer particularly facilitative interpretations when conducting analysis in a second language as a result of his literal understanding of language rather than the metaphorical use of native speakers. Similarly, Kitron (1992) pointed out the equalisation of power asymmetries in the intercultural counselling encounter. The latter was also supported by participants in Barreto's (2013) study, who also suggested that the therapists' foreignness enhanced the clients' engagement in the therapeutic process and promoted the therapist's 'not taking for granted' stance, a benefit also identified in Morris and Lee's work (2004) on trainees. In my study, findings support theses positions, as participants perceived linguistic imperfection and the consequent need for in-session clarifications as facilitative to clients' therapeutic process and self-awareness, but also as a factor that helped them shed the 'expertise' that is often associated with the role of the counsellor. Given the beginning phase that trainees in this study were at, their foreignness may have facilitated them to move from a state of 'grandiose professional self' (McLeod, 2009) that is, 'the wish to be omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent' (Gans, 2010, p. 8) to

a more realistic state of professional identity. Additionally, therapist foreignness was perceived by participants as beneficial in the formation of a stronger bond with foreign, non-native speaking clients, a benefit identified also by Kissil et al. (2013) and present in the accounts of Costa's (2010) participants who mentioned the facilitation of therapeutic alliance as a result of communicating in a lingua franca. Whether clients benefit from working with foreign therapists is not the focus of this thesis and therefore will not be explored further here.

To bring this second master theme, 'benefits of foreignness' to a close, participants discuss that practising in a second language and culture is a great source of learning for themselves, as it promotes a naturally curious attitude towards the client's background and state, and motivates them to identify their biases. This confirms Dyche and Zayas' (1995) work, which puts forward the idea that intercultural therapy inspires the counsellor to adopt a stance of naïveté and curiosity, as well as Smith and Ng's (2009) findings that training in a foreign country enhances awareness of self and biases. Similarly, findings resemble Costa's (2010) participants' accounts which also pointed to some self-oriented benefits of practising in a second language, namely learning to tolerate anxiety and embarrassment related to misunderstandings and linguistic mistakes. Overall, the current study appears to cluster together benefits identified by foreign trainees and therapists in various existing studies and to enrich these by giving further details, providing a comprehensive account for the benefits identified by non-native speaking practitioners in beginning practice. In particular, this study reveals that trainees' non-nativeness and foreignness may facilitate the client's process by requiring clarifications and offer some 'common ground' in the establishment of a relationship with foreign clients; moreover, not being 'from here' facilitates a stance of curiosity, reduces bias and advances self-awareness, all elements in good counselling practice. The beneficial character of the trainee's foreignness will be tackled further in chapter seven, where possible motivations behind participants' tendency or need to highlight self-efficacy and advantages will be discussed.

The final master theme presented in this theme, i.e. 'counselling goes beyond words' reveals participants' sense-making of intercultural/interlinguistic counselling

practice. The nature of this master theme is slightly different from the other themes in this study. The difference is subtle and therefore I find it important to make it explicit. This final theme does not present participants' experiences, or sense-making of experiences of intercultural practice like the other themes up to this point. This section uncovers participants' *sense-making of the nature of counselling practice, based on their experiences of intercultural practice.* As a consequence, the place of these findings and their discussion in this thesis required particular attention.

On one hand, a view of counselling practice through the eyes of international students may exceed the focus and purpose of this current study which is interested in lived experiences of intercultural practice and sense-making of these experiences. What participants *believe* about counselling practice is not really central to this phenomenological work if it is not linked to experience. This last element is the key to my choice of including this section here: this last theme of findings illuminates the overall participant experience as these beliefs are constructed through personal experience of intercultural practice and therefore form part of their sense-making. Upon reflection I came to conclude that excluding them would restrict understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and hinder the purpose of this thesis. As a consequence, I decided to include this theme in the presentation of findings, but restrict the discussion around the impact of difference on counselling practice.

Findings from the master theme 'counselling goes beyond words' suggest that non-native trainees perceive counselling practice as *related* but not *restricted* to language use. Participants seem to identify a certain intangible quality in the counselling encounter, which is difficult to describe with words. As suggested earlier, this can be associated with the embodied, relational quality of the therapeutic encounter, as opposed to encounters that occur in non-therapeutic settings and which may be more dependent on language. Participants' descriptions draw from counselling theory but seem to become substantiated through their intercultural experience. For example, when participants detail their specific in-sessions actions and behaviours, they reveal that their non-nativeness urges them to pay close attention to non-verbal signs of communication such as sighs, silences, facial expressions, eye contact and body stance, alongside the client's verbal message. It becomes obvious that trainees

describe the elements of basic counselling skills such as attentive listening (Mearns & Thorne, 2007; Sanders, 2002), but link them to intercultural difference and practice. Similarly, participants point to the relational and also embodied nature of the therapeutic encounter, maintaining that the bond between therapist and client can be formed irrespectively of linguistic and cultural differences. This corroborates Jimenez' proposal that the connection between therapist and client 'goes well beyond a mere exchange of words' (2004, p. 1374) and Costa's participant's suggestion that this takes place at a 'deeper level' where language 'just serves the purpose of getting the meaning' (2010, p.19).

My findings highlight that, although once the rapport is established, language barriers do not really impede the therapeutic process, linguistic diversity may impact negatively on the creation of this bond, if the therapist fails to demonstrate their capacity to understand the client. This is a theme that has not been problematised in the relevant literature. Hence, this last theme, on the one hand confirms theory on the uniqueness of the therapeutic relationship exceeding language and words, but on the other, illuminates the necessity to attend to the potential obstacles that non-nativeness may impose on the development of trust in a beginning phase of the counselling relationship. This contributes to existing literature by 'flagging up' a potential risk of interlinguistic practice, advancing trainees' preparations and expectations in that direction.

To conclude, the third super-ordinate theme evinces that these four non-native speaking trainees perceive themselves as adequate practitioners despite the difficulties they face. Not only that, but they also put forward specific advantages of intercultural practice. Overall however, this last section indicates that, based on participants' experiences, the quality of intercultural counselling is not understood as inferior to or different from any therapeutic encounter since counselling 'goes beyond words'.

5.8 Concluding Discussion for Study A

The three preceding sections discussed in detail each super-ordinate theme's main findings and how these link to existing literature, as well as highlighted their main contributions to the various bodies of literature to which they are linked. In this section I examine the study in a holistic manner, positioning it in the relevant literature and pointing out its main contributions to existing scholarly material. I have identified four main themes, which I wish to discuss here.

First of all, study A demonstrates that, despite the various struggles that non-native speakers face, they do not appear to encounter impediments in their actual practice. If what trainees struggle with is not related to outcome and efficacy but to process and the self, then perhaps what can benefit them the most is better preparation for this demanding process and more support during training. To that end, I argue that scholarly attention should be also directed towards these practices, instead of focusing on assessing efficacy and reducing difference. This, however, is rarely the case. Even Mittal and Wieling's (2006) study, which entails a section of implications for training, suggests that programmes ought to offer opportunities for improvement of acculturation and enhancement of language proficiency. This reveals an expectation of foreign trainees' assimilation into the western curriculum (Lau & Ng, 2012; Pattison & Robson, 2013), which is not consistent with a position of valuing cultural diversity and promoting difference in counsellor education (BACP, 2009/2012; CACREP, 2009; COSCA, 2012). I agree that improvement of language use and familiarity with culture may indeed facilitate the practical struggles that foreign trainees encounter; nonetheless, these practices do not necessarily ease the anxiety and the interrelated fears that trainees may face in relation to beginning practice in a foreign linguistic and cultural setting. To that end, in chapter seven I offer detailed implications for multicultural training. These constitute one of this thesis' key contributions to knowledge and practice.

Secondly, apart from the interrelated struggles that intercultural practice may entail, study A also highlighted non-native trainees' 'positive' experiences in relation to this phenomenon, such as their help-seeking attitudes and existing support networks, as

well as their self-efficacy and satisfaction from practice. The existing literature's tendency to focus largely on struggles, may have led to an understanding of intercultural practice and multicultural training as problematic, reinforcing the literature's interest in assessment of outcome rather than exploring process and subjective experiences. Without diminishing the importance of the literature on struggles to which this thesis also contributes and which can enhance trainees' support during training, I contend that dissemination of findings that demonstrate the ways in which non-native trainees handle the complexities entailed in their foreignness, as well as their self-efficacy and identified benefits for practice, can be particularly informative for the wider counselling community; therefore these experiences deserve to find a place in the existing bodies of literature. My study contributes to that end, by offering comprehensive discussions on the 'positive' aspects of beginning intercultural practice.

A third unique aspect of this study is related to its methodological approach. As pointed out in various sections of this chapter, the project's idiographic character makes a significant addition to the existing literature. This is evident in two respects: first, in relation to the narrowed-down content of the study and its focus on one aspect of counselling training, namely beginning practice, which gave space to participants to reflect upon and discuss their experiences in depth and to offer rich material on the phenomenon of beginning intercultural practice. This is linked to the second idiographic aspect of this study, namely the detailed analysis and presentation of findings, which allowed participants' experiences to be scrutinised and which, as a consequence, facilitated the emergence of new themes. These themes, and therefore the various ways in which idiography advanced the respective bodies of literature have been discussed in more detail in the three preceding sections. Overall however, my study's idiographic character offers a rare in-depth insight into the subjective experiences of a group of non-native trainees who begin their clinical practice in a second language and culture in Britain.

On a final note, this study's most important contribution may derive from its focus on linguistic and cultural difference. As pointed out in chapter two, existing literature on multicultural counselling training focuses either on international counselling

trainees in general, rarely differentiating between native and non-native speakers, but often pointing to the centrality of second-language use, or on visibly different minority ethnic trainees and the difficulties they encounter in relation to power inequalities and discriminatory behaviours. This study's emphasis on, but not restriction to the trainees' non-nativeness, puts forward an under-researched but fundamental perspective of intercultural practice, namely interlinguistic practice, and expands the existing body of literature through the elucidation of a 'new' significant aspect of difference. The centrality of non-nativeness for practice, demonstrated by the richness of my participants' accounts, indicates the pertinence of exploring language and second-language use in the field of intercultural counselling. To that end, I propose that the relevant literature can benefit from broadening its focus on the 'big seven' socio-cultural attributes, i.e. race, gender, age, sexuality, religion, social class and disability (Moodley & Lubin, 2008) and their intersections, and start attending also to language as an aspect of difference. This point will be elaborated both in chapter six and chapter seven of this thesis.

5.9 Summary of Chapter

In the first section of this chapter I presented findings from study A, offering insight into non-native speaking trainees' experiences of practising in a second language and culture. Findings were structured in super-ordinate themes and supported by participants' quotations. In the second section of this chapter, I linked these findings with existing literature and provided discussions on the theme's unique contributions to knowledge, underlining the overall significance of this study. The next chapter presents findings from study B, illuminating native-speaking, foreign-born trainees' experiences of beginning their clinical practice in the UK.

Chapter 6: Study B: Native-speaking, Foreign Trainees' Experiences

6.1 Introduction

Correspondingly to chapter five, this chapter is dedicated to study B, which is based on accounts of four female native speaking trainees from English-speaking countries of North America: Emma, Mary, Susan and Lisa. Participants' respective countries of origin are not disclosed to safeguard their anonymity. In terms of ethnicity, participants were all white. At the time of the interview, Emma, Mary and Lisa had accumulated nine months of client experience and Susan eight months. Naturally, their respective experiences of clinical practice vary in terms of workload and placement sites.

Following a similar structure to chapter five, I start this chapter with the presentation of findings for this study. Once this is done, I then move on to the discussion of the respective super-ordinate themes, followed by an overall discussion of the study's key contributions to knowledge.

Prior to the presentation of the findings from study B, it is essential to point out a particularity of this dataset. As explained elsewhere, this study is interested in investigating trainees' experiences of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. Nevertheless, based on native speaking trainees' contributions, I came to realise that the phenomenon under investigation may not have been as central to participants' experiences as anticipated. Put simply, participants did not necessarily perceive themselves as 'different' and were not always conscious of their distinctive experiences of practice specifically related to foreignness and different language use. This was a constructive realisation that promoted both my understanding of participants' sense-making of 'foreignness' and 'difference' but also my awareness of my own bias and preconceptions. This will be examined further in the discussion section of this chapter, but needs to be explicit from the start to avoid confusion.

Presentation Of Findings

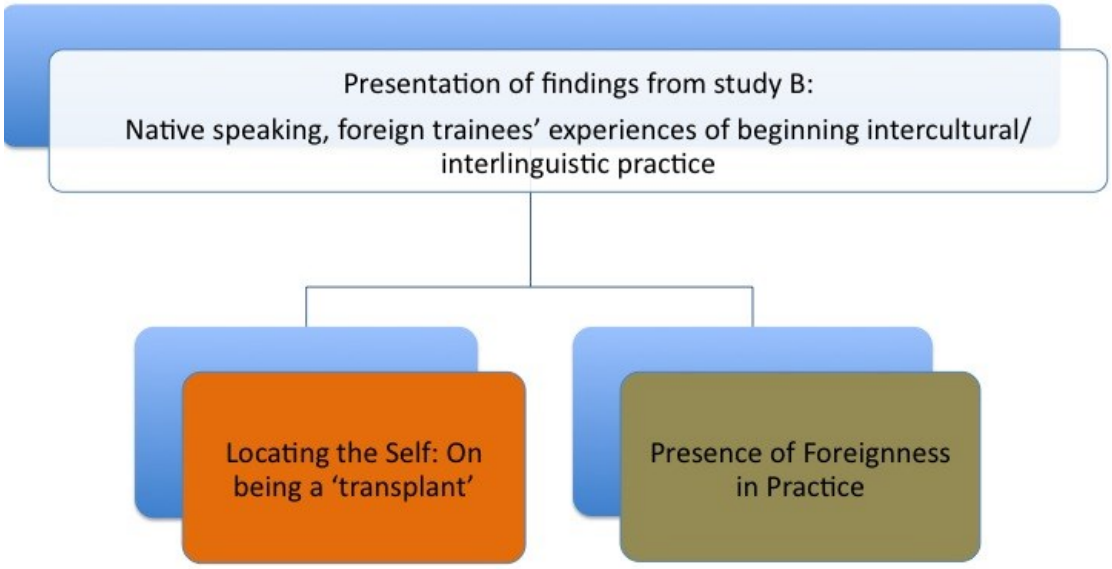


Figure 8: Super-ordinate themes for study B

Two super-ordinate themes have been identified in this study. The first, 'Locating the Self' presents participants' understanding of the 'self as a foreigner' and the 'practitioner-self as a foreigner', with the first master theme examining participants' general experiences of feeling foreign in the host culture, and the second addressing issues of foreignness related particularly to a counselling role. The second super-ordinate theme, entitled 'Presence of Foreignness in Practice' gathers together participants' experiences of practising with and relating to clients. In particular, it presents trainees' 'perceived impact' of foreignness on practice, the 'complexities' that native speaking foreigners identify in intercultural practice, as well as the 'benefits of intercultural counselling'.

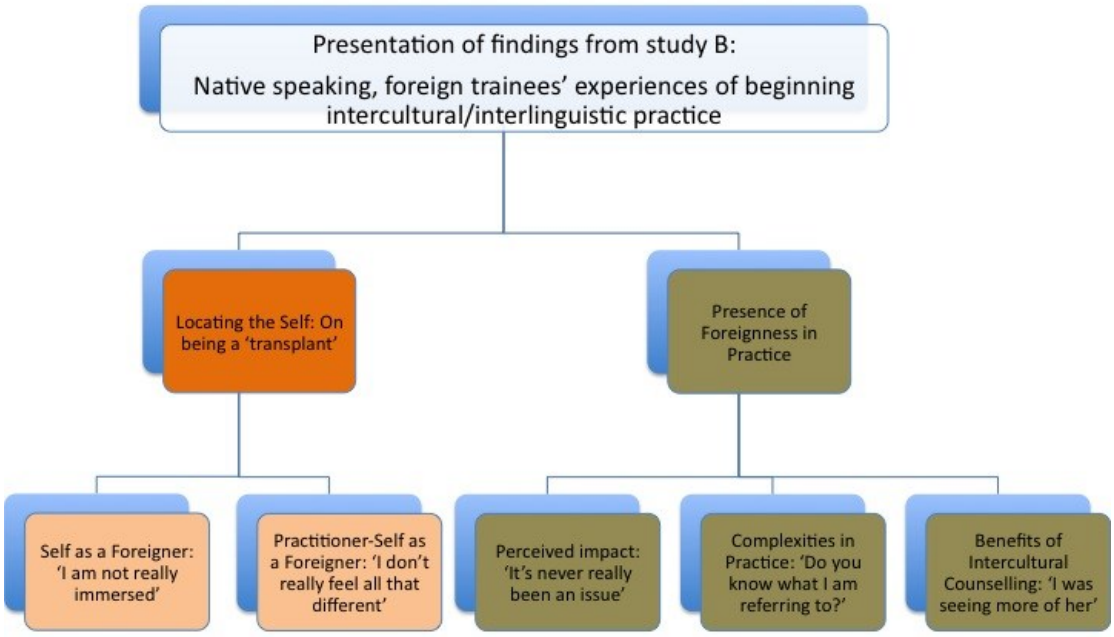


Figure 9: Super-ordinate and master themes for study B

The presentation of findings begins with an exploration of the themes that compose super-ordinate theme 1.

6.2 Super-ordinate Theme 1: Locating the self: On being 'a transplant'

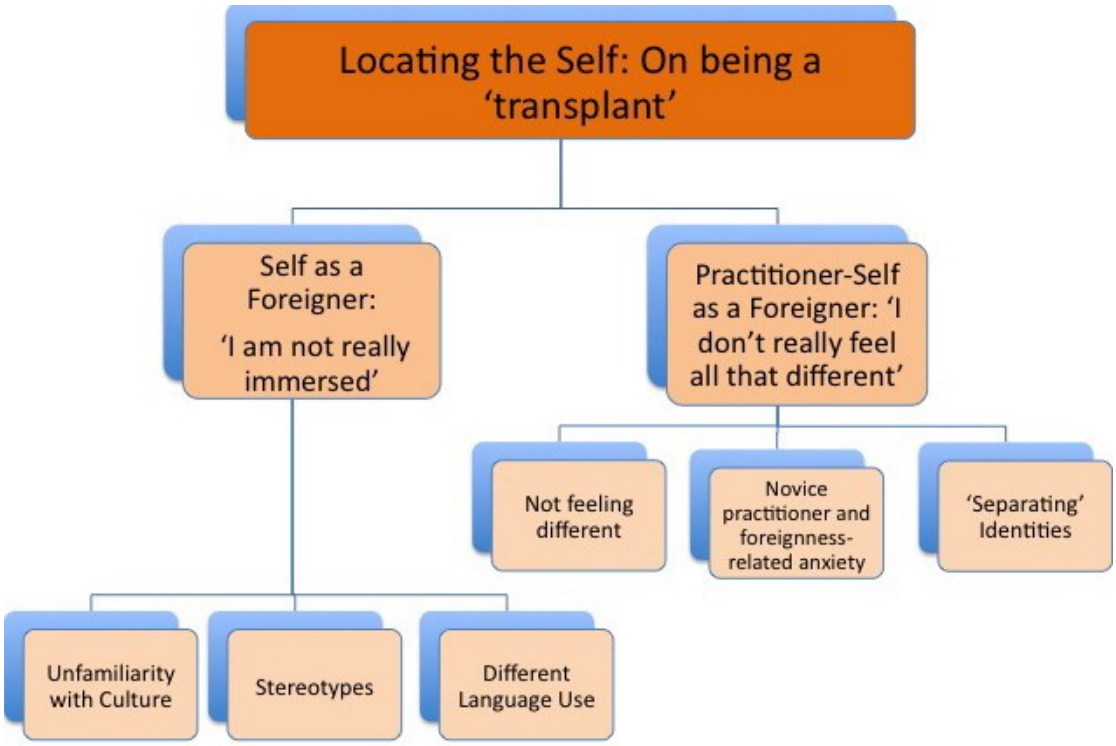


Figure 10: Super-ordinate theme 1, with master and sub-themes

To begin with, super-ordinate theme one reveals that while participants were able to identify several aspects or elements of difference in their social life and their training settings, in most cases, they expressed rather explicitly that they did not feel culturally different or foreign when practising with clients. Findings will demonstrate that this duality of experience is better understood as ambivalence rather than dichotomy, as the two experiences complement each other. To that end, master theme A of super-ordinate theme 1, namely 'Self as a Foreigner' does not refer directly to participants' experience of counselling practice but other aspects of their life in Britain, such as training and socialising. Whereas these experiences might seem outside the scope of the current project that focuses on counselling practice, they are included here for two reasons: First of all, they occupy a big part of

participants' accounts, despite my attempts to retain the focus of discussion around experiences of counselling practice. As discussed elsewhere, while ensuring that the focus of the project is maintained, IPA is committed to presenting participants' subjective experiences regardless of the researcher's agenda (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, overlooking such a big part of my participants' accounts would be in contradiction of my methodology. Secondly, after considerable reflection on this dataset, I came to see that these experiences are not as irrelevant to the phenomenon under investigation as they may seem; on the contrary, they elucidate it. These experiences are often directly juxtaposed in relation to participants' experiences of counselling practice in a foreign setting, and are therefore pertinent to the topic of this study. Finally, however, while based on my participants' contributions I distinguish between self and practitioner-self, these two concepts cannot be seen as distinct but as different dimensions of one, multifaceted identity.

6.2.1 Self as a Foreigner: 'I'm not really immersed'

As explained, it is useful to go through participants' experiences of 'feeling foreign' and witness the richness of these accounts, to better understand the absence of perceived cultural difference in counselling practice. The breadth and depth of participants' accounts on this topic is, I think, impressive and indicates that native-speaking foreigners experience a number of phenomena in relation to living in a host country. There are three main areas that participants identify as interrelated, namely unfamiliarity with host culture, receiving stereotyping comments and different language use.

Unfamiliarity with culture

One of the ways that participants' foreignness was substantiated in their accounts, was through the acknowledgement of not being familiar with, or immersed in, the host culture. This becomes evident in the following excerpt from Mary:

> *'I don't know if I so much feel like I'm really immersed in British culture because it's like- I don't know, I- there's so many people from all over the place (....) and probably since living here, besides my clients, I only* ***know*** *two* [removed region] *people' (Mary 307-9)*

While discussing her perception of her foreignness, Mary reveals her positioning in relation to the host culture, i.e. the fact that she does not feel particularly '*immersed'* in it. This suggests an understanding of feeling different or of 'us versus them'. This becomes also evident from her interrelated uncertainty or perhaps indifference as to what is considered to substantiate 'them', exhibited by the seemingly interchangeable use of 'British' and the specific regional identity that has been removed from the transcript for confidentiality reasons. Moreover, it is interesting that she attributes her lack of cultural immersion to the fact that, due to the multicultural character of the host environment, she has not been able to establish connections or relationships with 'local' people.

This idea is similar to Susan's experience, who also suggests that lack of interaction with people from the host culture is probably responsible for her feelings of isolation or of not belonging to the 'local group'. At the beginning of her contribution, Susan is referring to the multicultural character of the host environment:

> *'I think that it further isolates you a bit from assimilating into the culture, because you- I think I- what... I very much wanted to be part of British culture and* [local region removed] *culture and I think that it it it's more difficult if (....) everyone else is a transplant (....) it makes it difficult I think to meet people and be a part of the culture that you are actually in' (Susan 153-7)*

Apart from the direct connection between social interactions with locals and familiarity with the host culture that Susan suggests here, there is another point that is worth noticing. Although Susan has not stated clearly that she feels like a foreigner, the very essence of her wish to become part of the host culture ('*I very much wanted')* reveals that she does indeed feel foreign or not part of the new environment. Also, like Mary, she seems to group the British and the regional 'culture' as one wider 'local' culture (them), which is different from her N. American one (us). A focus on her linguistic choices, reveals another interesting point: the negotiation of her experience from a rather distant ('*isolates <u>you'</u>*), to a more personal ('*<u>I</u> very much'*) and back to a more distant again ('*that <u>you</u> are'*), potentially suggests Susan's intention to locate her experience in a wider context and make sense of it as something ordinary that may occur to any other 'transplant' like her,

that is, other foreigners. The use of this specific metaphor is another point that invites scrutiny. Susan refers to her and others' 'foreign identities' by the term 'transplant' at diverse points in the interview ('*if I'm a transplant from another country', 'my clients who are also transplants, so from other countries'*). This repetition seems to imply that the choice of this metaphor is not random but deliberate, mirroring how Susan makes sense of herself in the host country. The actual use of the term 'transplant' allows multiple interpretations. Susan may be feeling like an 'organ' that originally belonged to one 'organism' (her background culture) which has now been isolated from that environment and 'transplanted', fitted in a new context. She may also be feeling like a 'plant' that has been removed from an originally protected 'indoors' environment (home), to be re-planted 'outdoors' in a foreign, more precarious environment, suggesting the uncertainty that this experience may incorporate. In any case, this process of 'transplanting' seems to be successful as there are no signs of Susan malfunctioning in the new context, yet it appears to incorporate a perception of 'not belonging' entirely, a consciousness of 'being foreign'.

Moving on to Lisa's experience in relation to feeling foreign in the host culture, she states that:

> *'I feel like that's a different country and culture I'm working in I'm not- I'm still... I mean I've been here yeah* [number removed] *year*[s]*, but I'm still like trying to understand and learn about...' (Lisa 135)*

Lisa is the only participant that is able to make direct connections between her foreignness and her counselling practice ('*culture I'm working in'*), and for this reason, her experience creates a divergent element in this dataset. She feels that she practises in *'a different country and culture'*, proclaiming the intensity of that feeling of 'foreignness'. The slight incoherence in her speech ('*I'm not- I'm still... I mean'*) calls for additional examination. The first utterance ('*I'm not'*) might be suggesting her certainty that she is **not** familiar or part of this '*different'* environment. The second ('*I'm still'*) introduces the significance of time in the process of locating the self in relation to difference. Time and its impact on participants' experiences and sense-making of the phenomenon under investigation is also evident here. Lisa

affirms that although she has accumulated a certain period of time in the host culture (which has provided her with **some** familiarity), she is still *'trying to understand and learn'*, an element that unveils her sense of not belonging, hence her experience of feeling foreign. This negotiation of the self as a foreigner seems to be a developmental process, which, however, is still ongoing.

Emma's experience reflects a more specific occurrence of feeling foreign. Although overall she feels fairly familiarised with the host culture (explored in more detail later), she identifies some differences in socio-cultural norms related to communication:

> *'there's there's... ehm there **can** be from my understanding a culture of protocol of you don't necessarily speak loudly to other people, you have to speak in a specific way or you have to approach a subject in ehm this way or that way, ehm or go through correct channels whereas [N. Americans] it's like "pfff! If I have something to say to you I'll say it to you" ' (Emma 275-7)*

Here Emma refers to cultural differences associated with intercultural communication. She appears to be aware of the tendencies of her own ethnic group '*whereas [N. Americans] it's like...'* where opposition is acceptable and of the local culture's *'protocol',* where objections would not be directly fed back to an interlocutor. To link back to other participants' accounts, Emma's contribution encompasses an obvious reference to the concept of 'us versus them', just like Mary's and Susan's contributions exhibited earlier. It is argued here that even though she does not explicitly refer to *how* she feels different, her understanding of the above-described distinction between cultural groups, unveils an experience of feeling different from others in this host environment, in spite of her familiarity with it.

Stereotypes

Another feature associated with participants' experiences of feeling foreign in the host culture were references to occasions of having felt stereotyped. Starting with Lisa:

> *'people (....) would make some very rude comments about [N. Americans] and that would make me feel like really kind of small and*

> *wishing- wishing I wasn't a [N. American], almost feeling bad that I was one, and yeah, I don't know... But that was never really in the room' (Lisa 498-501)*

In this excerpt Lisa discloses the impact of hearing stereotyping comments about her cultural background on herself and her confidence. Although these comments were not made deliberately to stereotype or offend her in particular (she explains earlier that people were unaware that she was N. American), they still impacted detrimentally on how she felt in relation to her foreignness and her socio-cultural identity. In particular, Lisa felt *'small'* and '*bad'* about being a N. American, but also discloses wishing she *'wasn't'* one. Her even hypothetical desire to denounce her nationality in order to avoid being stereotyped uncovers the intensity of Lisa's difficulty with not belonging to the host culture, and her overall challenge with being a foreigner in Britain. Her slight change in pace and articulacy towards the end, as well as the faintly abrupt end of exploration ('*...yeah, I don't know...But'*) are possibly also indicators of her discomfort with discussing her difference-related experiences. At the end of her contribution however, she explicitly contrasts that to her experience of placement, perhaps in an attempt to stay focused on the interview topic. The fact that she makes that explicit statement may on one hand reveal the complete absence of clients' stereotyping behaviours, potentially pointing to a differentiation between the counselling context and social life. On the other hand, a more 'suspicious' interpretation[21], would suggest that this manifests her need to appear accepted by her clients and present her experience of intercultural practice as smooth. This second more suspicious standpoint will later be corroborated by a negative client experience in Lisa's account.

Susan also discloses having felt stereotyped about her cultural background in her social life, but not in her practice:

[21] As explained in chapter 4, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis follows Ricoeur's hermeneutic's of empathy and of suspicion (Smith, et al., 2009).

S:'I feel like ehm this is more- would be more in my social life, [N. Americans] I think they have negative stereotypes as travellers and ehm...yeah I don't know...

*I: have **you** ever felt stereotyped?*

S: yeah definitely mhmm

I: in what ways...?

S: ehm I think that eh [N. Americans] get stereotyped as (...)' (Susan 429-435)

A close look at Susan's choice of words reveals an incoherence that is worth noticing. In the first line, it is clear that she refers to her personal experience ('*in my social life').* Right after that, she uses the third person ('*they'*) to refer to the cultural group she belongs to. At this point, it is unclear whether this is a way to take some distance from that experience or whether she is talking generally about stereotypes. In order to clarify this, I pose a direct question ('*have **you** ever felt stereotyped?')*, emphasising my interest in her subjective experience. Without second thoughts and in a very natural manner, Susan discloses that she has '*definitely'* felt stereotyped. My subsequent prompt to elaborate is not very successful, as it does not result in Susan sharing her subjective experience. Instead, she lists a number of common stereotypes for N. Americans, which are omitted here to safeguard her anonymity as they are related to her particular country of origin. This reply left me wondering whether Susan had indeed personally experienced these stereotypes, or whether she was reproducing dominant societal discourses on stereotyping behaviours towards N. Americans. Instead of questioning this further at this point, I 'superficially' accept it and attempt to double check by enquiring whether this was only related to her social life or whether she has may have received similar reactions from her clients:

'I: so you got some of them [stereotypes previously listed] here [S:yeah], in your social life [S:mhmm], but do you feel that any of your clients might think something, you know, when they hear that you are [N. American], that they would-

> *S: put those together? [I: mhmm]... I don't know, I can't say that it's something that I feel like has come up or been an issue or... that I felt stereotyped by my clients' (Susan, 436-441)*

This reply now recapitulates that Susan has indeed received some stereotyping comments related to her country of origin in her social life, but has never encountered such reactions in her counselling practice. This reiterates the suggestion hinted in Lisa's account that the experience of counselling seems different from participants' experiences of living in the host culture. A rather significant difference between the two accounts (Lisa's and Susan's) that ought to be pointed out is the disparity of their reactions to having felt stereotyped. While Lisa appears significantly influenced by having been stereotyped, Susan seems to be more relaxed about it, suggesting that the impact has not been so great on herself. Nonetheless, her tendency to move away from the 'I-voice' discussed earlier might divulge her way of distancing herself from an experience that is potentially challenging or unpleasant.

Moving on to Emma's account, she also mentions being on the receiving end of stereotyping comments. In her case, these occurred in her training environment but not in her practice:

> *'I haven't actually felt stereotyped in that sense with my clients, I think in in the programme, there's different things that have come up because I am [N. American], but that... that isn't necessarily with my clients...' (Emma, 265-8)*

Like the other three participants, Emma is also definite that stereotyping behaviours by others are not present in the therapeutic setting. After a prompting question she provides a list of the stereotypes she has 'received' as a N. American in Britain (*'I think that it's sort of been implied to me that [N. Americans] have a tendency to [*removed to conceal country of origin*]'*) and continues:

> *'I think that that's probably the most ehm stereotyped that that I would be. But to be honest I fall into that stereotype, so it's a- it's not so much of a stereotype as a truth' (Emma, 281)*

Apart from the similarity with other participants' accounts about not encountering any stereotyping reactions in practice, Emma's experience differs in terms of her

reaction to this situation. While other participants state that others' 'stereotyping' is responsible for them 'feeling foreign', Emma seems to suggest that it is not the stereotypes that make her 'feel foreign', as she is already aware that she is different because of her socio-cultural background ('*I fall into that stereotype'*). Whether the acceptance of difference is indeed genuine and therefore reflects her cultural awareness, or whether this is Emma's way of disguising her unease with these characteristics, would be difficult to pinpoint due to lack of further information. Yet the important point to be made here is that Emma discloses feeling different than domestic peers and that she attributes that to her cultural background, hence revealing her sense of 'difference' through others' stereotypical comments.

Different language use

The third and final distinguishing feature that participants discuss in relation to feeling foreign is the different use of the English language between their home and host environments. Despite the fact that trainees' mother tongue and the language of the host country are officially 'the same', participants identify several differences in the way language is used. Some of these differences are present in counselling practice and will be presented under the theme 'Complexities in Practice' in super-ordinate theme 2. This short section however focuses on the exploration of participants' sense-making of different language use as a distinguishing feature between themselves and others, thus relating to this super-ordinate theme's overarching concept of 'Locating the Self'.

Related to self

Native speaking participants mention that having an accented speech that is different from the dominant accent in the host environment is one of the things that makes them realise their foreignness and, in fact, their difference from the host environment. For example Susan, when asked directly to elaborate on her contribution and clarify in what ways she feels different, states that the element that stands out is:

> *'my accent, or lack of an accent' (Susan 425)*

Apart from the obvious significance of accent for locating the self in a foreign, English-speaking country, this sentence reveals that for Susan, her N. American accent is considered a 'non-accent' when compared to the dominant local accent adopted by the majority of people in the region she practises in. Given that there is not a single regional accent as this varies significantly among regions, cities but also neighbourhoods in the same city, this generalisation suggests again the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', with the latter being a homogenous group of 'local people'. The important element here is her sense of '*lacking'* an accent. This shows something about the subjective character of 'normality' (in this case understanding of a 'neutral' accent) and again reveals Susan's understanding of her foreignness in relation to the host culture.

While discussing the fact that she does 'not feel foreign', Emma also discloses feeling conscious of her ethnicity when people pay attention to her accent:

> *'well, I feel [N. American] when they make fun of my accent' (Emma 78)*

The similarities between her experience and Susan's sense-making of linguistic difference and socio-cultural identity are evident. What is distinctive, however, is that, although Susan's experience reveals a personal, subjective negotiation with foreignness, in Emma's case this negotiation seems to derive from others' comments. Her words imply that if there were no other people present to '*make fun'* of her accent, Emma would not feel N. American or she would not feel different. This elucidates the significance of others in making sense of a subjective experience.

Finally, Lisa also reveals an awareness of having an accented speech that reveals her foreignness:

> *'even though I'm a native English speaker, I was very conscious of the fact that everyone else had a different accent from myself' (Lisa, 83)*

This suggests that for Lisa, her accent is an essential feature that plays a role in her perception of difference and how this is constructed through a comparison to others. Her use of past tense (*'I was'*) reveals a particular association of this awareness with

the past, perhaps suggesting that with time she grew to be more confident with being foreign. The remaining part of the excerpt unfortunately does not offer further insight into this developmental process. The fact that '*everyone else'* but herself has a different accent could be interpreted as a sign of a possible latent sense of isolation or of not belonging in the new environment. Once more, the dichotomy of 'us versus them' becomes prominent, elucidating an understanding of foreignness and difference in relation to others. This will be better understood through the following section, which discusses participants' understanding of local people's different use of language.

Related to Others

Emma discloses that on some occasions the English language can be used so differently in the host environment that it seems like a 'different language':

> *'I just have a memory of this one little old man who was calling me and trying to ask me questions, I could not understand a word he said! Ehm and so- I mean it's, it's been it's been rare that I've- I've had these moments where I'm like "you are speaking a different language!" but there have been a few of them yeah (...) I have yet to experience it with my clients' (Emma, 101-106)*

Emma discloses an experience where the particular use of the language by people belonging to the host culture has been so different to her own that it significantly affected communication ('*could not understand a word'*) and which led to English as being perceived as *'a different'* language. This is again hinting towards an understanding of language as beyond purely grammatical elements, stressing culture-related, linguistic elements such as accents. While Emma does not offer specific explanations about this person's particular use of language and the elements that made it so 'different', it seems reasonable to assume that she has been referring at least to accent, the element that differentiates her from people in the host country, if not more linguistic and paralinguistic elements. It is interesting that Emma initially attempts to elaborate on that ('*Ehm and so...'*), yet then changes her mind and makes explicit the rareness of this experience instead. This could unveil Emma's wish to offer additional information on how she handled this situation, but also a dominating preoccupation to ensure that she would not be perceived as someone who is unable to

understand English, perhaps revealing a fear of being perceived as incompetent in her practice. This is similar to the point made earlier about Lisa's clarification of not being stereotyped in her practice.

Susan illuminates this by pointing out that apart from the more obvious linguistic differences such as accent, use of slang and idioms that might be present across cultures, there may also be different nuances or references in the way the same words are being used in different places. Again this experience is not related to her counselling practice:

> *'there were more differences than I thought there would be, especially here like I thought [N. American] culture is very similar to British culture and it is, but there are like small details of like the nuance of conversation or words that are used or phrasing that ehm... it's kind of difficult, takes time to pick up on (....) Like different references to things that you know (...) if you are in the middle of a conversation and you've never heard it before, you know, if you take what they say literally, and [N. Americans] do, you have to ask "what are you saying?" ' (Susan 105-110)*

This quote offers a number of interesting points. First of all it makes known Susan's surprise about the existence of cultural differences between the host environment and her home ('*more differences than I thought')* and also gives away her prior expectations about the host culture (*'I thought [N. American] culture is very similar...').* Interestingly, it also discloses her actual sense-making of it ('*and it is but...').* Additionally, it illuminates what Susan considers as linguistic differences ('*like the nuance of conversation or words that are used or phrasing'*), and the fact that she perceives intercultural communication as '*difficult'* and as something that requires time to adjust to. The same idea suggested earlier about language being beyond grammar and words is put forward by Susan here, as she discusses particular nuances inherent in the background tacit use of a language in a particular context. She introduces the example of (different) use of irony in the speech ('*if you take what they say literally and [N. Americans] do'*), which again hints at her perception of a dichotomy between the two cultural groups: 'us versus them'.

To this point this section presented findings of participants' sense of foreignness and difference in the host culture. Although these have not been directly linked to counselling practice, they were often accompanied by direct or indirect juxtapositions to that setting, demonstrating their relevance to the focus of the study. The following section presents participants' experiences and sense-making of their practitioner-self as a foreigner.

6.2.2 Practitioner-Self as a Foreigner: 'I don't really feel all that different'

This section discusses three different but connected themes that address the issue of being a foreign practitioner in beginning practice. The first theme suggests that native speaking foreign trainees may not be 'entirely' aware of their foreignness and do not feel particularly culturally different in their practice. The second theme contradicts in a way the first one, by connecting novice-practitioner anxiety and foreignness. Finally the third, unveils participants' tendency to 'separate' their socio-cultural identity from their professional one in order to practise more effectively in the host setting, pointing to foreign trainees' negotiation of their foreignness in relation to practice and also their understanding of difference. As I will argue, this last theme also explains the twofold experience of feeling or not feeling foreign in social life and counselling practice.

Not feeling foreign

As suggested, three participants mentioned explicitly not 'feeling foreign' when practising in the host culture. Given the richness of the preceding sub-theme (feeling foreign), participants' responses around 'not feeling foreign' in the therapeutic room came as a surprise. Why do participants who identify features of cultural and linguistic difference in their everyday lives and training in Britain not discuss such experiences in relation to their counselling practice?

This section begins with presenting participants' experiences of 'not feeling foreign' and of how they make sense of those.

Starting with Emma's account, she explicitly denies any feelings of foreignness in the host environment including her practice, and offers possible explanations for that:

> *'well I've been to... the UK and English-speaking countries in Europe a number of times, I've been ehm... I've been coming since [year] on different occasions so, ehm I've* ***been*** *here before. It's a very similar culture in many ways, I think, to [N. America] and [N. American] culture because it's English-speaking, it's ehm Westernised...' (Emma 42-5)*

Based on Emma's account, prior familiarity with the host culture ('*I've* ***been*** *here before'*) as well as perceived similarity with her own cultural background are elements that facilitate her sense of belonging and prevent her from feeling foreign in the counselling role. It is interesting to take into consideration the elements that Emma identifies as playing a role in rendering two contexts similar, namely language ('*because it's English-speaking'*) and culture ('*it's ehm Westernised'*), or to be more precise, language and an East-West dichotomy of culture. So for Emma, working in an English-speaking 'Westernised' country where the dominant ethnicity is white, is a possible reason why she does not feel foreign in her practice. This will be explored further in super-ordinate theme 2. Before we move on, it is interesting to note Emma's use of the word 'westernised' instead of 'western', which could imply Britain's assimilation to the predominant western society of North America. This may offer some insight into Emma's positioning in relation to the host culture. A similar connection has already been noted in relation to Susan's perception of 'not having an accent' and will also be made in super-ordinate theme 2, under the section 'complexities in practice' in relation to Mary's understanding of the local use of language as 'made up'.

I now move on to Mary who plainly states that she does not feel *'all that different'* when practising in Britain. Ostensibly, this statement communicates her perception and experience of difference in relation to self in practice. Nonetheless, her contribution does not exist in a vacuum; it is worthwhile to consider the broader context of her experience in order to gain a better understanding of why she might have said this. Discussing her practising experiences in the UK, Mary discloses that her difference facilitated a particular client's process (this will be discussed in detail

in super-ordinate theme 2 under the theme 'benefits of intercultural counselling). As a follow up to this disclosure, I ask her whether she can think of any other occasions where her difference may have influenced or even benefited her practice. To that, her full reply is:

> *'mmm (4') I don't know, maybe it's not that I really... not that I really picked up on... mmm... I don't know, it's one of those things that it would be really interesting to ask my clients (laughs) [I:yeah] I'm not sure, I think for the most part I don't really feel all that different' (Mary, 336-9)*

Mary's hesitation suggests that her experience does not match my (admittedly direct) question. Instead of negating or declaring ignorance however, Mary leaves the possibility open and deflects the question ('*that it would be really interesting to ask my clients'*). This may be a defensive response, but may also suggest that Mary negotiates this possibility in her mind, but cannot retrieve any actual relevant experience in her memory. Moreover, it may also denote that Mary is trying to please me by not responding negatively to my inquiry. Asking her clients about beneficial aspects of her difference could also reveal an inner wish to confirm her competence, a wish that she knows that cannot be fulfilled, hence the laughter. Alternatively, her laughter at this point may function as a release of anxiety related to not knowing how to answer my question. The fact that her statement of not feeling '*all that different'* comes at this point of the interview may therefore act as a way of 'getting off the spot', of answering a question for which she does not have a clear answer rather than mirroring her actual experience. Having said that however, this statement may also be genuinely representing her experience. It may indeed be the case that Mary, a participant who mentioned several occasions of feeling different in the host environment, has a different experience in her counselling practice. This possibility kindles once more the previously suggested proposition that the context of counselling practice is indeed very dissimilar to other aspects of living abroad substantiating this group of trainees' accounts of both feeling different and not feeling different.

Novice practitioner and foreignness-related anxiety

This section presents participants' contributions in relation to being anxious about their clinical practice. Participants' experiences vary: Lisa and Mary appear to link their foreignness to their perceived professional development or formation of practitioner-self and disclose related fears of rejection. The other two participants, Susan and Emma, do not make such direct connections. In an attempt to stay close to the project's focus, in this section I explore in depth the first two participants' accounts (that are related to foreignness and novice practitioner anxiety) and succinctly discuss Emma's different experience to allow divergence to emerge.

Lisa's account evinces her preoccupation with her foreignness in the counselling context, revealing how her novice practitioner anxiety is intertwined with her foreignness. In the following extract she speaks overtly about her anxiety related to practising in the host culture:

> *'I guess I was thinking about ehm just feeling really inexperienced and I'm gonna have these people coming to get professional help and I was worried that maybe they would think I wouldn't be able to relate to them and understand them (....) 'cause I'm not from* [removed region]*' (Lisa, 82-84)*

This excerpt illuminates how novice practitioner anxiety ('*feeling really inexperienced')* is associated with, or exacerbated by cultural difference ('*I'm not from...'*). It is interesting that at this point, Lisa's words uncover a fine difference in her experience: she appears to doubt her competence because of her inexperience, rather than because of her foreignness. The latter comes into play only when she discloses her fear of being rejected by clients. This indicates that perhaps for Lisa, counselling competence is more linked to self-evaluation, while foreignness is depending more on clients' feedback. This may be associated with the beginning phase she is at in her professional development but also the unpredictability of others' reactions to difference. Later in the interview, Lisa provides more opportunities to understand her anxiety in relation to beginning practice and being a foreigner:

> *'but something that I've noticed that I **do** do, like, I find that I do in my sessions now is ehm...I tend to ch- and I don't think I did it consciously at first, I would like start to match the language they used, like adopt a lot of British terms into my vocabulary (....) I don't know if I'm trying to like make my accent more British-sounding to kinda fit in? (laughs) I don't know...' (Lisa, 285-288)*

The fact that Lisa tries to change her speech to match her clients' style is not an uncommon way of managing intercultural communication issues and has been described as 'communication accommodation theory' (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005; Giles & Ogay, 2007). It is particularly interesting for this study however, as it reveals Lisa's preoccupation with linguistic difference, but also the centrality of language in the formation of identity. In other words, this extract elucidates that accented speech and different language use may impact on native-speaking trainees in a similar way as on non-native ones, feeding their self-doubt. Another interesting element in Lisa's account is her reference to a developmental aspect of this situation *('I don't think I did it consciously at first'*). The fact that speech accommodation is a recent, and indeed 'conscious' addition to her practising style, may indicate Lisa's management of other sources of anxiety or preoccupations and reaching a point where she can also make 'conscious' choices about her language use in practice. At the same time, her attempt to address this linguistic difference reveals another important issue, namely her anxiety of not '*fitting in'*. I found this point particularly intriguing and probed her for elaboration:

> *'I: I'm struck by the "trying to fit in" [L: mhmm] ehm… how-*
>
> *L: yeah wanting- I think, trying to fit in is wanting to sound like the dominant culture or sounding not so foreign (....) for some reason I feel like, more particular in the beginning stages of my training ehm... yeah, sounding foreign would be like, would be bad. Like what if- and I think, it had to do a lot with my fears of what if they don't like [N. Americans]? What if I get this client who is going to say you know "what's going on with your country?" and "how can you be my counsellor, I mean (...) how can you begin to understand me?" ' (Lisa, 273-277)*

There are several points to attend to in this short extract. The first couple of lines divulge Lisa's wish to decrease the 'difference' between individuals from the

'dominant culture' and herself. This reveals Lisa's self-perception of herself as belonging to a minority group, and perhaps even her perceived inferiority in relation to the people from the 'dominant' culture. The use of the present tense, which quickly switches to the past tense through a clarification ('*more particular in the beginning stages'*) points to the fact that Lisa may still feel this way, in spite of her effort and personal development. Lisa elaborates and suggests that '*sounding foreign'* would be '*bad'*. The rationale behind this is that accented speech may cause rejection by clients who would doubt her adequacy to counsel them based on established stereotypes. Lisa's account entails some incoherence in relation to time and development, which may point to the ongoing process of this realisation for her: while initially she states that **now** she tries consciously to *'match the language'* in order to *'fit in',* she then asserts that her anxiety to 'fit in' is mostly related to her past, as she is now more confident. This manifests the challenging, developmental nature of counselling training, the particular demands of intercultural practice and the personal effort and investment that this situation requires.

Mary also discloses her anxiety in relation to beginning practice in a foreign environment, *'specially in the beginning'*, pointing to the centrality of time in building self-confidence and developing one's professional identity. Mary's preoccupation with being inexperienced and from a foreign country came up several times in her interview. In the following example, she discusses her experience of working with a client *'with such a thick accent'* and wanting to

> *'...come across as competent [I:mhm] is what it was, yeah... Like, specially right in the beginning of my work like, that was just all I wanted, was to just come across as competent, like even though I just felt quite anxious at times, I didn't want that to come across' (Mary, 140-142)*

This quote brings to light Mary's concern with appearing confident and competent in front of her clients, a fact that unveils her novice practitioner anxiety and need for external validation discussed in the literature review section. As this experience is related to a client who challenges her because of linguistic differences ('*thick accent*'), this extract indicates a possible exacerbation of novice practitioner anxiety

by foreignness-related anxiety even for native speaking foreign trainees, corroborating other trainees' experiences. Mary's contribution manifests that this preoccupation was particularly prominent *'right in the beginning',* making yet another reference to the significance of time and increase of self-confidence with experience. At a different point, Mary also describes her initial anxiety and lack of confidence to ask for clarifications, depicting the beginning phases of forming her professional identity and the difference with her current, more professionally mature state:

> *'I felt a lot less confident to just be like "I'm sorry I'm actually not, you know, not from this country", and you know, like if it would be ok if I just asked them to clarify, like, now I feel a lot more confident to say something like that, but it just felt like if I had something like that to say, it'd be like "I'm a counsellor and I'm supposed to be understanding what you are saying" ' (Mary, 105-8)*

This extract reveals once more Mary's novice practitioner anxiety combined with, or expressed through, her 'being foreign'-related anxiety. Again, the difference between 'then and now' is salient, delineating personal and professional growth. Her hesitation to ask for clarifications reveals her wish to come across as competent, and to prevent a potential rejection by the client, reflecting her low confidence at the beginning practitioner phase. The last sentence ('*I'm a counsellor and I'm supposed to...'*) illuminates this further: Mary discloses her early belief that the counsellor is '*supposed to be understanding*' her clients, a belief that sounds rather 'theoretical' as it does not manifest how this concept translates for her, i.e. how she personally makes sense of the role of the counsellor. Though Mary does not provide any details on how she moved beyond this point and reached her current, more 'advanced' state, she appears assured that she has now gained more self-confidence. This reveals a more mature practitioner-self that is no longer entirely dependent on external evaluation and theoretical concepts. Additionally, when talking about her anxiety she admits that:

> *'I definitely stressed about it more than needed to…' (Mary, 118)*

This sentence demonstrates Mary's ability to look retrospectively at her experience, reflect on it and assess her behaviour. This in itself divulges the level of growth she has achieved in her professional capacity, but also the particularly stressful nature of beginning counselling practice.

Emma's sense-making of professional identity and the counsellor role is fairly divergent from Lisa's and Mary's. She does not appear to believe that her practitioner-self is influenced by her cultural difference, nor does she identify any foreignness-related anxiety or low-self confidence associated with difference. The main argument that she puts forward is prior experience in a similar capacity, which facilitated the formation of a professional self prior to coming to Britain for training. While participants were recruited based on having accumulated approximately similar experiences of working with clients in the UK (six to ten months), during the interviewing process I found out that Emma had already worked in a similar capacity in her home country. This gave her a self-impression of professional maturity, leaving no space for exploration of how her foreignness may have impacted on early practice and herself:

> *'I was working fairly extensively and I do have a good understanding of what a client in need ehm needs (...) my way of being, although it's been sort of slightly shaped while I've been here based on some of the training in the programme and experiences, for the most part the foundation is is not only my education in [N. America] but ehm who I am (....) I mean it's hard to say where that what has shaped that because I've... I mean I've been counselling people since I was in the fifth grade, because I was a peer counsellor in elementary school so I mean it's really hard to say where I ehm where counselling starts and where I begin ehm like the training in that...' (Emma, 319-325)*

Emma discloses that she believes her professional identity has mainly developed prior to undertaking her current training in Britain, via a combination of her 'real' self ('*who I am')* and her prior training ('*my education in [N. America]')*. Although she identifies a small growth associated with her current training abroad, this does not seem to play an essential role in the overall development of her professional identity, the shaping of which seems to be perceived as dating from a very early age *('fifth grade')*. As suggested earlier, this attitude could be the reason why she has not

been able to explore features of the influence of her foreignness on the development of her professional identity. Indeed, if the formation of her practitioner-self started and developed in a context where she was not a foreigner, it is understandable that she is not making pertinent connections to being a foreign novice practitioner. The fact that she perceives her professional identity as fairly established does not seem to allow sufficient space for new factors, such as foreignness, to emerge. Therefore, the fact that foreignness does not seem to influence Emma's development of a practitioner-self, as in the other two cases, may not necessarily derive from a potential insignificance of the impact of foreignness on the practitioner-self, but with the more 'advanced' professional phase Emma presents herself as occupying.

Having said that, I need to state that it is not this thesis' concern to question participants' maturity and their personal and professional growth. As there is no intention or interest to 'assess' or compare participants' phases of professional development, I have refrained from commenting on how they make sense of their practitioner-selves and make links to their contributions across their interviews. Following a more 'empathic' interpretative stance, I have accepted each participant's own perception of their professional development. Nonetheless, this section indicates that at the moment of the interview, participants were at different *perceived* phases of a developmental continuum, designating that counselling training is a highly personal, idiographic matter.

'Separating' identities

This theme presents participants' accounts of negotiating aspects of their identity to match diverse roles in different contexts. In particular, participants disclose 'separating' their socio-cultural identity from their professional one in order to practise effectively. This separation should not be seen as a disconnection but as a process of temporary 'distancing' or of 'fading' of one and 'emergence' of the other, to facilitate appropriate behaviours in various situations such as counselling practice, social life etc.

This theme starts with Lisa explaining how people in social contexts perceive the impact of her cultural background. Lisa discloses that friends have mentioned that the way she speaks can be perceived as '*loud'* and *'overly confident'*:

> *'they would say "*[name] *it's not that you are loud, it's just-" somebody said "your voice does carry and we can always spot the [N. American]" ' (Lisa, 246)*

> *'we've known each other quite well but, they said at first like sometimes just the way I would speak, it would come across as this... this overly confident...' (Lisa, 251)*

Exploration of how Lisa perceives and reacts to comments related to her background and potentially stereotyping attitudes has taken place earlier under the theme 'stereotyping'. What is important to keep in mind here is that '*being loud and overly confident*' is Lisa's understanding of how her socio-cultural identity is *perceived in the host environment*. In my attempt to investigate related perceptions and reactions in the practising environment I ask her to make a connection with this context. She replies:

> *'I find with how- like I guess my counselling style would be- I tend to be quite laid back (....) yeah like I don't really see... see my more... my more like outgoing kinda like...I don't know... I don't wanna say- I don't know if that bit of me, I don't see that affecting how I am in ehm the counselling room but what I- but what I do find, is that ehm... I don't know if passive is the right word, but I do find that I am more laid back and kind of like mellow and calm in the counselling room' (Lisa, 259-264)*

Lisa discloses that she behaves differently in her counselling practice than her social life, revealing some level of 'distance' between her professional identity and her socio-cultural one. It is perhaps of use to remember that Lisa has elsewhere disclosed taking up a more 'passive role' in practice to avoid being potentially rejected by clients due to her cultural background. While with her friends she may behave in a way that she can come across as '*loud*' and '*confident'*, in the counselling room she is more *'laid back', 'calm'* and *'mellow'*. The coherence in her speech is slightly lost in this section: after a slight hesitation, she describes herself as '*outgoing'*, denouncing the terms '*loud and overly confident'*, a fact that may suggest that she

does not agree with these characterisations and she prefers to see herself as outgoing. The phrase '*that bit of me'* suggests that Lisa perceives herself as consisting of different parts, potentially referring to aspects of identity. These however do not seem to be rigid, separate entities, but fluid '*bits'* that interplay with each other. What becomes clear from this extract is that Lisa is conscious of her 'socio-cultural identity' or her *'more outgoing' 'bit'* fading or occupying a less prominent position in situations where her professional identity, the more '*mellow'* and '*laid back'* self, is dominant. This fact explicates the idea of foreign trainees separating or distancing diverse identities to practise effectively in a new culture.

The same concept is present in Emma's account as she states explicitly that she is aware of not only *behaving* differently but also *being* different in her counselling practice and in her social life:

> *'I think I'm very different in in my counselling practice than I am with my peers (....) my demeanour in in session is also very different (....) so whereas with with my friends and in the programme I'm not afraid to ehm raise my hand and say "I disagree" ehm in a situation with a client, because of my orientation and usually the very sensitive nature of the of the stuff we are doing, ehm if I if I do have a question or if I want to challenge a client I do it in a much more subtle, quiet way and more of a questioning way ehm so it's it's less ehm brash as a [N. American] could be stereotyped as, ehm and I I think* ***for myself*** *within the counselling room, I take culture out of it to some degree ehm and I focus more on my client and what my client is bringing' (Emma, 286-292)*

It becomes evident that in her social life ('*with my friends and in the programme'*) Emma is a confident person who is not '*afraid'* to support her opinion and challenge others. She is also aware that because of the theoretical orientation of her training and the nature of the profession, such behaviours may not be aligned with her counselling role. Hence, it can be assumed that Emma has learned through her training that there are certain attitudes that promote counselling practice and therefore knows how to moderate her socio-cultural identity and accommodate her behaviour accordingly. The notion of moving in-between identities is therefore elucidated again here; Emma's explicit disclosure of conscious 'removal' of cultural

traits from her practitioner identity in order to be able to focus on the clients' needs (*'I take culture out of it'),* elucidates this theme.

Given Emma's difficulty in separating herself from her practitioner identity discussed earlier (*'it's really hard to say where I ehm where counselling starts and where I begin'*), her ability to *'take culture out of it',* that is to distance her socio-cultural identity from her professional one, comes as a surprise. Is it possible for a practitioner, and in particular someone who appears to have such a close connection between 'real self' and practitioner-self, to separate these aspects of identity? The essence of this will be better understood in the light of Susan's account. Susan also makes references to consciously and deliberately removing aspects of her personality or social-cultural identity from the counselling room in order to be effective in her work:

> *'sometimes it feels like to be like a good counsellor you almost act like this hermitic lifestyle like- as a hermit almost' (Susan, 447)*

While the beginning of the quote reveals Susan's understanding of the theory behind effective practice rather than her subjective experience (*'it feels like to be like a good counsellor'*), the continuation of the extract (cited below) convinces that this is actually representative of her own way of making sense of that situation, deriving from her experience. The choice of the terms *'hermitic lifestyle'* and *'hermit'* is interesting. To my mind, these words suggest that there is a challenging aspect in the profession, requiring sacrifice and isolation. At the same time, a hermitic lifestyle is a conscious decision, involving free will and determination. Therefore it could be argued that for Susan, training as a counsellor is challenging and requires an extent of isolation, yet this is not seen as a disadvantage, but as part of a conscious, personal choice. Moving back to the theme of separating identities, Susan continues to explain that:

> *'there's a level of being a counsellor where you have to be neutral, anonymous and ehm aspects of who you are and your personality are a part of how you work but it's not anything that you would discuss in the work 'cause it takes up space [I:mhmm] and you can't focus on your client. (...) Your personality is not something that you discuss or talk about in the work, so aspects of- that would be tied to cultural*

> *difference, like if clients ask me about details of my life, which they are often- like I would never share that with a client' (Susan, 447-451)*

Susan makes a simple, yet valuable point that facilitates the overall understanding of the negotiation of identities and the consequent 'separation' process discussed in this theme. Put simply, Susan explains that while one's personality, (which incorporates socio-cultural identity) is part of one's professional identity ('*aspects of who you are and your personality are a part of how you work'*), this is not a central feature in counselling practice as it would not be in line with one core aim of counselling, namely focusing on the client. Susan's contribution clarifies that this 'separation' does not appear to be specific to foreign practitioners as a way of managing their difference and not letting it interfere with practice, but a common element of counselling practice. What needs attention in this excerpt is the continuous use of '*you'* instead of a more personal 'I-voice' and the slightly prescriptive manner ('***have** to be neutral*', '*it's not...that you would discuss'*) which hints at a reproduction of theoretical knowledge related to counsellor training rather than her own subjective experience. Nonetheless, once more her concluding remark '*if clients ask me (...), which they are often- like I never share that with a client'* divulges that this is not merely a theoretical concept, but a position that Susan has internalised through her encounters with clients who often ask her to share '*details of her life'*.

Overall Susan's contribution is extremely helpful as it assists the illumination of a theme that other participants have been trying, perhaps less articulately, to express. Finally, to facilitate a better understanding of the nature of the 'separation' of professional and socio-cultural identities discussed in this section, I include Susan's concluding statement:

> *'that's why I said it's almost like a hermit life because they they're not separate, but they are. I think they're separate in terms of who you get to be around other people (...) you are different ways, but it's not like you change or you are not relating in a real way' (Susan, 489-491)*

It seems that for Susan diverse identities are separate yet the relationship among them is rather fluid and permeable ('*not separate but they are'*). As already suggested in the introduction of this sub-theme, the diverse identities are not

mutually exclusive, but co-exist and serve different purposes. Her final comment (‘*it’s not like you change, or you are not relating in a real way’*) is particularly enlightening: The ‘removal’ or ‘separation’ of one’s socio-cultural identity from the counselling context should not be seen as an obstacle to one’s genuine, congruent way of being with clients (‘*not relating in a real way’*), but as a way of ensuring good practice.

6.2.3 Summary of Section

The first super-ordinate theme entitled ‘Locating the Self’ presented participants’ accounts in relation to their ‘self as a foreigner’ and their ‘practitioner-self as a foreigner’. The first sub-theme discussed participants’ experiences of feeling foreign in the host culture and offered insight into the specific areas where participants perceive differences, namely unfamiliarity with culture, stereotypes and language use. The second sub-theme, thematically closer to the phenomenon under investigation in this thesis, presented participants’ sense-making of being a (novice) practitioner in a host culture. Specifically, participants discussed not feeling foreign when they are in a counselling role, disclosed fears of rejection and practice-related anxiety, which, in two cases were explicitly linked to ‘not being from here’. Finally, this theme also presented participants’ tendency to ‘separate’ their socio-cultural identity from their counselling role. The next super-ordinate theme, presents findings that focus on intercultural practice rather than the self.

6.3 Super-ordinate Theme 2: Presence of Foreignness in Practice

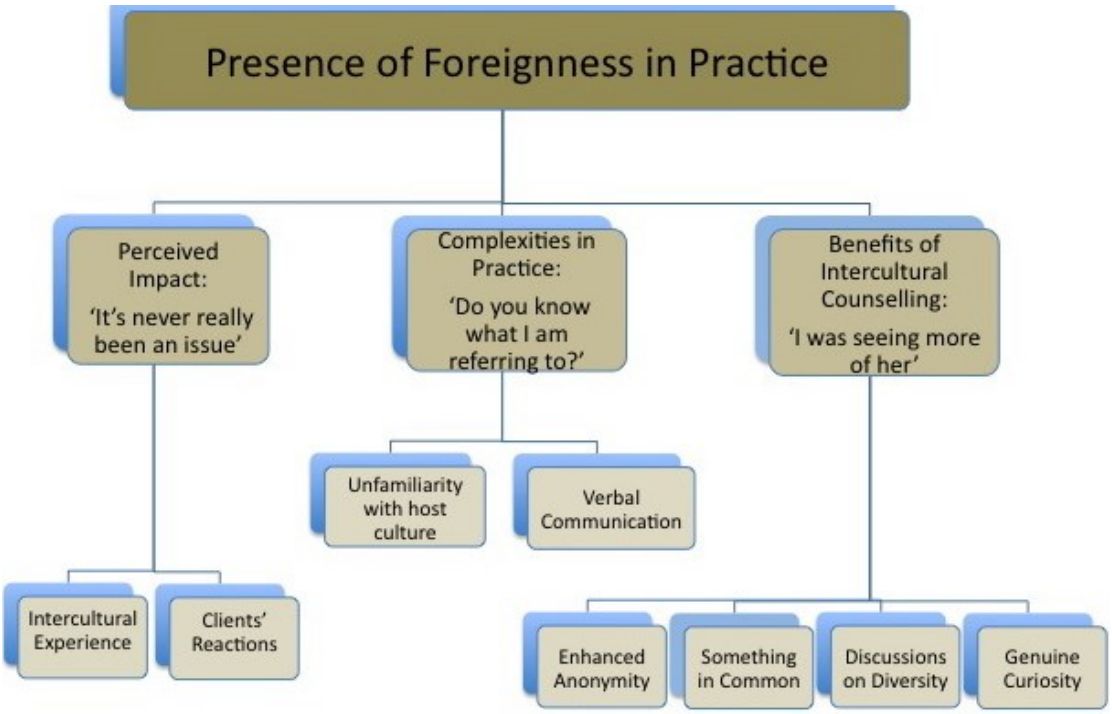


Figure 11: Super-ordinate theme 2, with master and sub-themes

Despite the fact that most participants did not feel particularly culturally different in the counselling context as presented in 'Locating the Self', they all identified and discussed aspects of intercultural practice that were relevant to them coming from another country or not being 'from here'. These features involve both complexities and benefits, which compose the second and third sub-themes included in this presentation, entitled 'complexities related to practice' and 'foreignness as beneficial' respectively. The first sub-theme included in this super-ordinate theme, namely 'perceived impact' presents how native trainees make sense of the impact of their foreignness on practice as not 'being an issue'.

Similarly to participants' ambivalent experience in relation to self (presented in super-ordinate theme 1), this contradiction was a confusing element of this dataset

and required considerable attention. How do participants who disclose not feeling foreign in practice, identify and discuss ways in which their foreignness impacts on practice? Different possibilities came to mind: were participants trying to please me and made references to themes they thought would facilitate my project? Were they concealing feeling foreign in practice to appear as competent practitioners who focus '*on the clients' needs*'? Upon reflection I realised that the key to this contradiction was not participants' attempt to conceal anything or please the researcher, but the different way of understanding the concept 'foreignness' and 'impact of foreignness on practice'. This will become clear in the first master theme of this section, namely 'It's never really been an issue'. It is, however, important to acknowledge, once more, the significance of being conscious of one's context and pre-conceptions when trying to understand others' perspectives.

6.3.1 Perceived Impact: 'It's never really been an issue'

The first master theme elucidates the previously discussed notion of native foreign trainees 'not feeling foreign' in their placement. As we will see, this section puts forward the idea of an adopted 'problematising attitude' towards foreignness. This means that, at times, participants spoke about their foreignness as if it was something negative, anticipated to create problems in their practice. When seen through this lens, participants were not able to identify the impact of their foreignness on their practice because they could not recall any problems or impediments. Having said that, I also need to take responsibility for the emergence of this problematising attitude in this dataset. As explained in chapter three, I take an epistemological stance of viewing understanding and knowledge as co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee. As a consequence, if participants understand difference and foreignness as something potentially problematic, this may be initiated or reinforced by me.

Participants' understanding of difference as 'not being an issue' has been shaped by their experiences of intercultural encounters. These are presented here in two sub-themes: first, through participants' eyes of intercultural counselling practice and second, through participants' disclosure of their clients' responses or reactions to their foreignness. Again, the difference between these two themes is subtle, but given

the idiographic character of this investigation, it is worth maintaining them as separate.

Intercultural experience

The theme of foreignness not being an 'issue' is introduced by Mary who discusses her fear of being questioned about her background by clients in the first session:

> *'because I sound different I felt like I would sit in the first session, and they would have so many questions about where I'm from, and what I'm doing and all these kinds of things, ehm but it really hasn't been an issue (....) but I really... I haven't felt like I've sat with a client and sensed that they are just kind of disappointed 'cause they really wanted to talk to somebody who was more like them [mhmm] or anything like that' (Mary, 420-434)*

From the beginning of the extract it becomes obvious that for Mary, her N. American accent is a feature that distinguishes her from domestic clients and reveals her foreignness ('*I sound different'*). This element was anticipated to inhibit the therapeutic session, as it would turn the focus of the session on herself rather than the client. Different language use as a distinguishing feature between self and other has been presented and explored in super-ordinate theme 1; this discussion will not be repeated here. As Mary discloses, her accent has not really drawn the attention she feared. What is interesting here is Mary's reference to potential problems caused by her foreignness (clients being *'disappointed'*), divulging her sense-making of difference as a potential problem for the client. The belief that being different might disappoint the client reveals Mary's understanding of her foreignness as a deficit. This will be further explored subsequently. A closer look at Mary's choice of words reveals something interesting. She uses the word 'really' twice. This strikes me as an effort to convince me that foreignness has 'not been an issue', which may indicate my role in the emergence of the 'problematising attitude' towards foreignness. Put simply, Mary's attempt to persuade me that it '*really hasn't been an issue'* may reveal her understanding of my anticipation to discover foreignness-related problems in intercultural practice.

Susan also puts forward this 'problematising attitude' in relation to foreignness or difference. The following extract allows a better understanding of my role as well to the construction or validation of this stance. The excerpt comes as an answer to a question regarding perceived linguistic differences in her practice:

> *'since I read what your PhD is, I've actually been thinking about that and I'm- nothing has come to mind actually specifically and I- I don't know if that's because it's not something that it's particularly important to me or something that I don't necessarily notice or hasn't really been an issue but not really...' (Susan, 113-115)*

Susan is unable to recall any perceived differences in relation to language use in practice. She discloses that the information she received outlining my project's aim and the focus of the interview led her to think about the potential influence of her foreignness on practice, prior to our interview. Even upon reflection, Susan is not able to identify linguistic differences present in the counselling room ('*nothing has come to mind actually specifically'*). This is not coherent with her position of considering her '*accent or lack of accent'* as the most distinguishing feature of her foreignness (presented in super-ordinate theme 1). This suggests that perhaps Susan too, holds a 'problematising attitude' in relation to foreignness: since her N. American accent is not 'an issue', that is, it has not created a problem, it is not worth mentioning as an element of linguistic difference in intercultural practice. This position becomes even clearer towards the end of the extract. On offering possible explanations why she cannot identify linguistic difference in practice, Susan suggests that it may be because she is personally not interested in the topic, or that she may not be able to notice it, or finally because this difference has not '*really been an issue'*. The first two reasons are easily understood: if linguistic difference is not of particular interest to her or not even evident in practice, she is not able to recall any related phenomena. The third reason however ('*hasn't really been an issue'*) indicates that her inability to recall and discuss language-related differences in practice is not because they do not exist, but because they have not created a problem, they have not been an obstacle for practice.

An attitude of viewing foreignness as a deficit that creates problems and potentially impedes counselling practice is also present in Emma's case; yet, it is presented in a different manner. In her interview, Emma makes references to other people's foreignness. These contributions elucidate Emma's stance towards difference, which seems to be similar to the 'problematising attitude' discussed above. In discussing working with a domestic client from a visible minority ethnic group, Emma notes:

> *'but she's from Asia and so she very much has a British accent (...) she'd be the only one that I'd say there's been any kind of difference and that would have been an acknowledgement to that we are from different cultures, but other than that my clients have been ehm fairly fairly consistently white, middle class ehm fairly educated and well-spoken so it- we haven't had too many difficulties.' (Emma, 216-219)*

A particularly striking element of this extract is the fact that the *'only'* client with whom Emma had '*an acknowledgement'* of cultural differences present in the room is an Asian client, i.e. someone who is a *'visual minority'*. This unveils Emma's position of perceiving difference when it is 'concrete', in this case, visible. She seems to suggest that when cultural difference is not associated with something 'tangible' such as visibility of ethnicity it is not noticeable, at least not in the therapeutic room. Since the majority of her clients 'matched' her physical appearance, social class, education level and style of language use, they did not have '*too many difficulties'* in practice. This suggests two things: on one hand, it shows that for Emma 'difference' is understood in terms of tangible, considerable disparities between people. Secondly, that working with clients who are different in terms of language, appearance, social class and education is likely to incorporate 'difficulties' or 'issues'. The 'problematising attitude' towards difference is again elucidated here.

The fact that difference becomes 'an issue' when ethnicity is involved came up in two additional points in Emma's interview. Once related to why she does not feel particularly foreign:

> *'I really don't, I don't think that it's* ***for myself*** *I don't think that it's something that is either an advantage or a disadvantage being from [N. America], but I think that that's probably because ehm... visually I resemble my clients...' (Emma, 247-9)*

and once in relation to why her foreignness is not central or noticeable in counselling practice. Here she refers to a peer belonging to a visible minority ethnic group:

> *'she gets it all the time that people always ask her "oh where about are you from?". And she's also a visual minority, so that might have something to do with it whereas- it's never become an issue in my practice at all' (Emma, 122-4)*

These excerpts illuminate Emma's perception of difference and explain further her overall attitude towards her foreignness in the therapeutic environment. As we saw in super-ordinate theme 1, Emma does not 'feel foreign' in the host country. Super-ordinate theme 2 makes clear that her foreignness has never been 'an issue' in practice, revealing that one of the possible reasons behind this is her physical similarity to the host culture. While the emphasis here is put on visibility of ethnicity, it must be highlighted that the client who evoked this discussion was raised in Britain and English was her 'mother tongue'. This did not invite Emma to discuss her sense-making of linguistic difference in relation to foreignness in therapeutic practice, which would have been interesting to explore. In sum, it becomes clear that the exploration of Emma's position towards a client of a visible minority ethnic group elucidates her position and self-perception of foreignness as noticeable when concrete and 'tangible'.

Clients' reactions

The second sub-theme that supports the notion that native speaking trainees' foreignness was 'not an issue' in counselling practice consists of clients' reactions to trainees' foreignness. That said, I need to make explicit that the theme is named 'clients' reactions' for brevity and does not suggest that this section presents clients' actual reactions. As this project is positioned in a hermeneutic-phenomenological framework where experience is always perceived as subjective, what is presented here is (my interpretation of) my participants' interpretations of what they understand as their clients' reactions in relation to foreignness. Following this, the commentary accompanying the excerpts does not revolve around clients' reactions as such, but is constructed in relation to how these (perceived) reactions might affect participants' experiences of practice and self in practice.

Neutrality or indifference

In most cases, participants' clients were aware of their therapists' foreignness and assumed (mostly correctly) their origin. Specific reactions or responses to difference may have varied; nonetheless, overall, clients exhibit a general attitude of neutrality or indifference to the therapist's background. For example, when Susan recalls her clients' responses to her cultural background she mentions:

> *'I've had clients ask me where I'm from, but they've never ex- I've- they've never made it explicit that I'm not, they haven't said "you are not from the UK" it's more of "where are you from?" and they kind of know I'm [N. American] already I think...[I: from the accent?] they assume that, yeah' (Susan, 136-139)*

Susan's words reveal that her clients are aware of her foreignness. The fact that she knows this, suggests that not only is her foreignness present in the therapeutic room, but she is also aware of it. The source of this knowledge, what gives her foreignness away, is her accent. This is slightly inconsistent with her inability to 'think of anything' related to her linguistic difference in practice, discussed earlier. The passage also divulges that her clients express some curiosity towards her background ('*I've had clients ask me where I'm from'*), yet in a rather indirect, polite way that shows interest rather than hostility. The clients' curiosity, but also the seeming politeness, may have diverse implications for the therapeutic relationship and process, but such analysis surpasses the scope of this project. What is important here is to underline the links between clients' politeness and neutrality and Susan's own understanding of her foreignness. As I pointed out on more than one occasion throughout this presentation of findings, Susan does not appear anxious, preoccupied or even particularly aware of her foreignness and its impact on practice. If anything, she comes across as struggling to relate to the topic under investigation. This may be related to, or shaped by, her clients' reactions and responses to her foreignness. In other words, she may address her foreignness in a relatively apathetic manner, as an outcome of her clients' indifference to it. This point will be elaborated through other participants' experiences.

Discussing her accent and how this is a foreignness-revealing element in practice, Mary also discloses that her clients assume that she is North American even if this is

not explicitly stated (‘*my clients, some of them will assume’)*. In the following extract, Mary makes sense of her clients’ reactions to her foreignness:

> *‘I haven’t felt like, when they assume I’m [N. American] that I feel like it’s a bad thing, or they would have liked me not to- or that they would feel aggressive towards me or things like that (...) I just haven’t experienced that’ (Mary, 425-7)*

Mary appears convinced about this experience (‘*I just haven’t experienced that’*). The reactions she describes above are hypothetical, but may also portray the reactions Mary fears, divulging the tension that she may have experienced in relation to practising abroad: the fact that Mary chooses to describe her clients’ neutrality by assuring me that they have not been disappointed (‘*they would have liked me not to’)* or acted negatively (‘*feel aggressive towards’*), may point to Mary’s inner fears about practising in a foreign setting. Indeed other parts of her interview reiterate the fact that Mary is anxious about beginning practice in Britain and about how she would be perceived by her clients. The fact that her clients have been indifferent to her difference seems to play a role in her understanding of difference as ‘not being an issue’ for practice and the decrease of her practice-related anxiety. Like Susan, Mary’s sense-making of how her difference may influence counselling practice seems associated with the responses she receives from her clients. This illustrates how experience is influenced through interaction with others; put simply, participants’ contributions highlight the intersubjective nature of making sense of foreignness-related phenomena and of one’s self.

Emma also discloses her clients’ indifference to her foreignness:

> *‘E: I never had anyone bring it up ehm I haven’t even had anyone asking me what part of [N. America] I’m from...*
>
> *I: do you think they understand you are from [region]?*
>
> *E: ehmm I don’t even know if they do, it’s it’s a- honestly that’s never been an issue within my practice (....) it’s never become an issue in my practice at all.’ (Emma, 119-122)*

This passage indicates that Emma's different cultural background has not been brought up or discussed in her counselling practice ('*never had anyone bring it up', 'I don't even know if they do'*). It is interesting to have a closer look at the exact question I ask and the reply Emma provides: while I enquire whether she thinks clients are aware of her origin, to investigate if and how she thinks her foreignness is perceived by others, she replies that '*honestly'* this *'has never been an issue'*. This reply suggests that for Emma, the counsellor's foreignness may create 'issues' in counselling practice. This supports the notion of a 'problematising attitude' towards foreignness discussed earlier, as well as her expectations in relation to what I would be interested in coming across in my data.

Divergence: frustration

While in most cases clients were indifferent or neutral in relation to working with a foreign counsellor, there was one case where the trainee's foreignness was noticed and perceived negatively. This example derives from Lisa's work with a client who expressed disappointment at her lack of knowledge on local issues and history. More particularly, this client would:

> *'talk about events or things that had happened or history that I may not, like I didn't know, and she would she'd say "well, do you know what I am referring to?" and I would be honest and say "no" and she found that frustrating [I:mhmm] that I didn't already have that reference point to go from (...) she'd often say that ehm first she thought well maybe it would be better for her to see like either another* [local] *counsellor' (Lisa, 147- 151)*

Part of this extract will be used again to discuss Lisa's 'unfamiliarity with host culture', in the following section of 'complexities', which in fact is elucidated through this particular contribution ("*do you know what I'm referring to?"*). Here the analysis focuses on how this client's reaction impacts on Lisa. In her view, this specific client was frustrated by Lisa's lack of solid knowledge of local matters and history. The client's checking of whether Lisa understands her ("*well, do you know what I am referring to?"*) is perceived almost as a confrontation, to which she replies 'honestly', admitting her ignorance. This moment divulges Lisa's struggle with disclosing ignorance and as a consequence, being potentially rejected by her client.

This fear of rejection may have been possibly exacerbated by the client's explicitly expressed desire to work with someone else, which is likely to, at least at some level, have felt like a direct rejection for Lisa. Discussion of participants' fear of rejection and anxiety took place in super-ordinate theme 1. Here the analysis focuses on the potential impact of this reaction on Lisa's understanding of how her foreignness influences practice. As presented, other participants who were rather unaware of or indifferent to the impact of their foreignness on practice disclosed that their clients were apathetic towards their difference. Lisa is the only participant sharing an experience of negative client reaction, and also the participant who appears particularly aware of and concerned with her foreignness and its potential impact on the therapeutic encounter. Whether this is purely coincidental or whether there is some link between the two is difficult to say. This point is important enough to be made however, as it puts forward the idea of intersubjectivity in the formation of experience. This is elucidated through the continuation of Lisa's contribution:

> *'I remember at first like feeling really on- put on the spot ehm feeling quite flustered and really anxious (...) and uncertain ehm I think really kind of I would start doubting my ability' (Lisa, 164)*

This short excerpt exhibits the direct connection between client reaction and trainee's self-efficacy and anxiety. Lisa states clearly that when challenged about her foreignness-related 'ignorance', she not only feels '*on the spot'* and *'anxious'* but also doubts her adequacy. The repetition of the word '*really'* suggests that for Lisa, this experience must have been fairly significant and that she wants to ensure that it is communicated. The excerpt shows that 'being foreign' - related anxiety not only influences the trainee momentarily, but seems to have a more general impact on how they make sense of their competence. Indeed as we saw earlier, Lisa was the participant who was most worried about her foreignness and how her clients would perceive her ('*I was so anxious, especially with working with clients', 'worried about are other people going to make judgments on me because I'm a [N. American]'*). It now becomes clear that Lisa's attitude towards her foreignness is also aligned to her (one) client's reaction, reiterating the intersubjective character of making sense of one's self.

This first master theme of super-ordinate theme 2 displayed participants' understanding of their foreignness 'not being an issue' in counselling practice. This understanding was illustrated through participants' interpretations of their own experiences of intercultural practice, but also of their clients' reactions to foreignness and difference, manifesting the intersubjective character of making sense of experiences. The section concluded with the presentation of Lisa's divergent experience of client reaction. This unique negative client experience introduces the next section, which presents the complexities that participants identify in practising interculturally.

6.3.2 Complexities in Practice: 'Do you know what I am referring to?'

While most trainees' overall sense-making of foreignness in relation to practice was that it was '*not an issue'*, all participants were able to pinpoint at least some domains affected by difference in client and practitioner cultural backgrounds. This indicates that even though participants conceptualise foreignness in terms of causing problems and do not think that their own foreignness impacts on their practice, at some level they do experience its influence on practice and are able to identify this in their accounts. This influence is evident in two areas, unfamiliarity with the host culture and verbal communication.

Unfamiliarity with host culture

In this theme participants discuss how their foreignness, and therefore their unfamiliarity with the host culture, is present and impacts on their counselling practice.

Emma mentions that due to the fact that she was not 'from here' she is unaware of clients' references **to geography and locations:**

> *'...if someone is telling me a story, if I haven't **been there**, I find it can be- I can be a little bit distracted trying to grasp in my head like a visual sense of what they're talking about' (Emma, 354)*

Emma seems to suggest that being unfamiliar with the context that her clients refer to can interfere with her ability to connect directly to her client's experience, a circumstance that can be distracting in her effort to understand them. This facilitates an understanding of one aspect of the impact that foreignness may have on counselling practice. This experience is also present in Susan's account, who also mentions that:

> *'...what I really notice is if people talk about going somewhere in* [region] *or being* ***from*** *somewhere visiting and I don't know where that is...' (Susan, 119)*

Both Susan and Emma seem to notice this 'effect' of their foreignness, namely their unfamiliarity with details of localities as an element that somehow interferes, even momentarily, with their focus on the client's narration. The two previously mentioned extracts are rare examples of participants' ability to discuss the presence of difference in practice, without making specific connections to problematic situations (like study A) or to advantages (discussed in following section).

The next feature that has been tackled by participants as present in practice and related to their foreignness is unfamiliarity with or perceived different **cultural norms, values, local history and gender roles**. Susan for example, notes:

> *'I think that it's more it was more about the... social connotations that are tied to cultural differences, so going out and drinking with friends, like I think she was aware that like well, in the* [local] *culture (....) pub crawls and all that it's very like it's very big part of their culture, in a lot of ways, but in [N. America] it's not, and I think that she wondered if I took her drinking as a problem or a negative thing' (Susan, 307-311)*

Susan's account proposes that differences in the cultural norms may become apparent in intercultural counselling situations and influence the client-counsellor interaction. The change of tense from present ('*it's more'*) to past ('*it was more'*) signifies that Susan here shifts from a more general discussion of her beliefs to referring to a specific incident that took place in her practice. While she, as a foreign practitioner, recognises and accepts the drinking culture of the host environment, she wonders whether her clients question her understanding and acceptance of that

phenomenon. Therefore the impact that foreignness may have on practice here takes the form of clients' mistrust or questioning the therapist's ability to understand, i.e. efficacy. This demonstrates that while the therapist's foreignness is not 'really an issue', it may become an obstacle in the building of trust between clients and therapist and the development of the therapeutic relationship.

Mary also mentions a cultural norm-related difference that she identified in her experience. Upon discussion about her practice, she states that she has identified cultural differences between N. America and Britain in the **values and norms** that some of her clients present:

> *'Like I feel like there's something that feels different from back home about families are raised here and how parents interact with their children' (Mary, 227)*

After identifying this difference in parenting strategies, she elaborates by discussing the fact that she is aware of different tactics, but also child-protection laws and regulations between her home and the host country, elements that she finds confusing for practice. She concludes:

> *'it's tough... 'cause it's not how I would parent, it's not how I was parented but it is I guess part of- I don't know if I can even say part of the culture, but I guess family culture maybe here' (Mary, 257)*

Mary explicitly distances herself and her experience from parenting behaviours she has witnessed through her work in Britain. She appears reluctant to generalise ('*I don't know if I can even say part of the culture'*), exhibiting a dedication to valuing the individual. Based on the frequency that she encounters the specific parenting behaviour however, her experience urges her to believe that there may be a link with some aspect of culture, such as '*family culture'*. So for Mary, the fact that she is raised in a different context than the one she practises in (different parenting norms) is understood as an element of difference impacting on counselling practice.

As discussed earlier, Lisa mentions experiencing the impact of her difference on practice in relation to **knowing historical facts** of the host environment. In her work with an older domestic client she describes:

> *'she'd talk about events or things that had happened or history that I may not, like I didn't know, and she would- she'd say "well, do you know what I am referring to?" and I would be honest and say "no" and she found that frustrating, [I:mhmm] that I didn't...already have that reference point to go from' (Lisa, 144-6)*

This extract has been used earlier to support the theme 'clients' reactions'. In this case the analysis focuses on how foreignness may impact on practice. It is evident that the trainee's foreignness has impacted on the therapeutic process through evoking an emotion in the client ('*she found that frustrating'*). This incident resembles the drinking culture–related situation that Susan mentioned above, only here the client's mistrust is explicitly expressed rather than assumed by the trainee. What is interesting, however, is that although the client experienced 'negative' feelings (frustration) in relation to her counsellor's foreignness, the overall experience is not presented as negative by Lisa. As we will see in the following sub-theme, this frustration was positively used and the therapist's difference could be seen as a benefit. Nonetheless, it is clear that unfamiliarity with details of the local life and history can influence the therapeutic process both from the standpoint of the practitioner (distraction or confusion with values) and that of the client (mistrust or question of being understood).

The final feature of difference that participants mention as present in their counselling practice has been **gender roles in cultural groups.** The presentation of this theme is slightly contentious with regards to ethics and protecting my participants and their clients' anonymity. Some participants hesitated to discuss particular experiences of client work, as this is an area that they would only discuss in supervision. As discussed in more detail in the Ethics section (chapter four), in order to protect my participants' clients' confidentiality, all specific references to identifiable characteristics (genders, countries of origins etc) have been removed from the transcripts. Excerpts referring to male clients have been altered and presented as if they were females, with use of the related terms (she, her). While this strategy has been followed throughout the presentation of findings, in this case there will be an exception and the extract will be presented in its original form, i.e.

referring to a male client. To safeguard the client's anonymity, the pseudonym of the participant is removed[22]:

> *'he was very critical about being... about experiencing ehmm emotions of vulnerability or sadness and I think that was tied to* [local] *culture about men not- of having this sort of bravado or needing to be tough.* ***That*** *felt cultural to me'*

This participant makes a connection between cultural background and specific roles attached to gender. We see that the participant, based on her experience with the specific client is led to believe that reluctance to explore, accept and discuss one's feelings of vulnerability might be an outcome of the particular gender role in the region in which she practises. It is interesting that this reference to gender roles is particularly attached to (*'tied to'*) the local culture, signifying the participant's sense-making of an intertwining of cultural attributes such as gender and country of origin or 'culture'. To her, men in this region of Britain are supposed to have a '*bravado',* they need to come across as '*tough'*, which seems to be different from the 'male role' in N. America. Regardless of the 'accuracy' of this understanding, both towards the specific client and towards societal gender roles in general, the fact that the participant interprets her experience in this way reveals that she is in a position to recognise and comment upon differences in gender roles across countries; which in turn, means that gender roles is a perceived area of difference between her home and the host environment that can be present in counselling practice.

This last section on gender roles was somewhat divergent from the discussion on how trainees' foreignness influences their practice. Yet to my mind, it still mirrors participants' perceived diversity in intercultural (and in this case 'inter-gendered') counselling and the impact of foreignness on practice; hence it was included here. The next sub-theme presents complexities in practice related to verbal communication. This theme is based on contributions only from Mary's account and

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[22] All participants were aware that I would use this tactic if I decided to include an element such as gender or origin. The participant who has provided the following contribution has been contacted again and agreed for the extract to be presented without her pseudonym.

therefore can be classified as divergent. As it was salient in her experience and particularly relevant to this thesis' interest, it is discussed in detail.

Verbal communication

Mary spoke extensively about the different use of language in different contexts. Given the interest of this project in language difference and use, this presentation dedicates considerable space to explore this feature. At the beginning of the interview Mary states that:

> *'I'd say what stands out the most is the accent [I: yeah?] yeah... I think it's taken... it's taken a while to get used to the accent, especially with some of the older, males here... I find I just can't understand what they say' (Mary, 82-4)*

Mary unveils that verbal communication can be significantly impeded even when it takes place between interlocutors who have the 'same' mother tongue. The idea that language goes far beyond grammar, pointing to the significance of understanding nativeness/non-nativeness from a broad perspective, begins to unfold here and will be elaborated through the rest of Mary's contribution. The fact that accent is '*what stands out the most'* is very interesting. An 'empathic' interpretation would probably suggest that given that accent is indeed one of language's most striking features, it is the one that '*stands out'*. A more 'suspicious' stance however, might suggest that this is an easy way of answering a difficult question: in a discussion around vague and perhaps also contentious concepts such as cultural difference, something as well defined and 'tangible' as accent, may be Mary's way of overcoming the interrelated difficulty of this task. Similarly, this could also suggest that Mary, a native English speaker, who may be aware of this project's focus on language use, deliberately discloses that accent is the central aspect of her experience, in order to please the researcher. Regardless, this contribution demonstrates a native foreign speaker's difficulty to understand a client when practising abroad, offering an insight into the possible complexity of practising interculturally even for native-speaking trainees. Apart from the accent, Mary suggests that age and gender can also influence a person's expression; differences in accents, age and gender may accentuate difficulties in communication ('*especially with some of the older, males'*). At a

different point she refers to slang and idioms as aspects of linguistic diversity between people from different backgrounds:

> *'because it wasn't just the accent but it was also the slang and just like there are so many different ways of saying things here that are just- kind of a made up language for me...' (Mary, 124)*

The extract exhibits Mary's understanding of language as related to context and culture rather than purely linguistic elements (slang, different expressions). The choice of words to characterise the particular use(s) of language in the host environment (*'made up language'*), is very interesting. First of all it suggests that for Mary any 'different' use of the English language derives from arbitrary interventions. While her use of language is 'ordinary', the local use of language is fabricated, invented. This is similar to the perception discussed earlier about North American accent being a non-accent, or Britain being a 'westernised' country, rather than a western one. In this case it would have been interesting to ask Mary to specify some of those *'different ways of saying things'* as well as what she means by *'here'*. Was she referring to local clients from the region she practises in, British English in general or a specific client? The term 'made up language' also hints at the intensity of linguistic difference she encounters in the host environment, which in a way reveals the difficulties she may have encountered in intercultural practice. An invented language is an unknown language, one that requires exertion, but also one that possibly leaves the 'foreigner' feeling incompetent as it is out of her control.

Although Mary does not elaborate on age and gender differences or slang, later in the interview she expands the thought that language use is influenced by other cultural attributes:

> *'there's such a range of accents and I think it's- possibly it's related to where you are from in the country, but also something to do with how educated you are and maybe like your socioeconomic status and things like that'. It seems like ehm so I mean, I don't know. Like I think linguistically I've really only struggled with that one client who you know was (...) quite uneducated and just spoke with a really heavy accent but also, a lot of slang and a lot of I don't know if you call them idioms or something like sa- different sayings and things that I never heard before' (Mary, 467-472)*

This excerpt provides rich information. The fact that she initially provides a general statement (‘*I think it’s...’*), which she then backs up with elements from her subjective experience (‘*I’ve really only struggled’*) indicates that Mary possibly constructs her opinions based on her experiences, illuminating the significance of idiography when conducting phenomenological research. At a different level, this extract highlights that for Mary, linguistic differences lay beyond well-defined geographical locations such as countries (with similar or different languages), an element that blurs the concepts of ‘native’ and ‘non-native speakers’ and which supports essential positions behind the research design of this project and my decision to interview native and non-native foreign trainees. It is also important to note that in this extract, Mary refers to a *struggle* in her intercultural practice experience, a point that resembles non-native speaking trainees’ experiences but also that supports the previously discussed problematising attitude. Finally, this extract reveals also the connection between linguistic difference and familiarity with culture (*heavy accent/slang – never heard before*).

Overall, this master theme presented participants’ perceived complexities present in intercultural practice. These complexities were identified both in terms of verbal communication and familiarity with culture. The next master theme presents participants’ understanding of advantages in intercultural counselling.

6.3.3 Benefits of Intercultural Counselling: ‘I was seeing more of her’

To this point, the presentation of findings indicates that while participants clarified that their foreignness is ‘not an issue’ in practice, they also identified several foreignness-related features that complicate interactions with clients. In addition to these complexities, they also identified and discussed elements of their foreignness that were perceived as potential advantages for practice. These advantages are grouped under four themes: enhanced anonymity, having something in common, promotion of discussion on diversity and genuine curiosity.

Enhanced anonymity

One of the identified benefits of intercultural counselling was the sense of added anonymity that the practitioners' foreignness can offer to the client. This additional level of anonymity was seen from diverse perspectives. For example Susan states that:

> *'sometimes I get the impression (....) clients feel like there's an added level of anonymity that I'm not* [region removed] *(....) it's like there's an added level of anonymity of ehm maybe not running into somebody that they know or or there's less chance of ehm me knowing someone that they would know...' (Susan, 250-3)*

Susan's experience prompts her to believe that a foreign counsellor can enhance the client's anonymity by minimising the possibility of therapist and client already knowing each other or having a common circle of acquaintances. This is a practical aspect of the beneficial character that participants' foreignness can have. Susan's experience allows her to identify another interrelated, yet less evident benefit. She explains that as the clients '*get to be a little bit more anonymous',* they can start to set free from the negative stereotypes that may be associated with their particular backgrounds:

> *'I think that if you are from the area that has maybe like social negative connotations like of a particular area, your family works at a particular job, ehm you can be stereotyped [I:yeah] and I think that with this particular client, I think that I didn't know the stereotypes that might apply to her so it was like I always- I saw her in a way where I was seeing more of* ***her*** *(....) there's like benefits for our relationship from the fact that I was different [I:mhmm] and so like it's like* ***she*** *gets maybe to be somebody different or like be a different way or...' (Susan, 271-9)*

This passage is another good example of the interrelatedness between one's subjective experience and one's sense-making of that phenomenon. While Susan's words initially appear to present her personal belief ('*I think... you can be stereotyped'*), it soon becomes clear that this derives from or has been confirmed by her own personal experience ('*with this particular client'*). What is being put forward here is that Susan's unfamiliarity with local stereotypes allows her to *'see more of*

her' client. It is therefore suggested that not being immersed in the environment where one practises in may be beneficial for the quality of the therapeutic relationship. Susan's experience demonstrates that being a foreign practitioner (and the related unfamiliarity discussed earlier) may facilitate a fundamental counselling attitude, namely endorsing a curious and non-judgmental stance towards clients and allowing them to be seen differently. In other words, the practitioner's foreignness may liberate clients them from established dysfunctional or unwanted roles they may be trapped in.

Lisa also refers to the idea that the practitioner's foreignness may increase the clients' anonymity:

> *'I had one client say that because I wasn't from* [region removed] *she didn't have to worry about me ehm like worry about my views about like say what's going on with the government [I:mhmm] or with society, ehm she felt that 'cause I was from [N. America] that I had a more of a... I was kinda neutral' (Lisa, 389-392)*

Unlike Susan's uncertainty ('*sometimes, I get the impression'*), Lisa's account reveals that her experience involves an overt acknowledgement ('*I had one client say'*) of difference as an advantage (*'didn't have to worry'*) by a specific client. This is not the only difference between the two accounts. While Susan focuses on the client's liberation from local culture-related stereotypical traits, Lisa emphasises the client's understanding rather than the counsellor's behaviour. Lisa's foreign background and the consequent unfamiliarity with local matters have been perceived as an opportunity for the client to discuss certain (potentially controversial) positions openly without feeling criticised. Providing an appropriate environment where the client can feel safe to disclose anything they wish to is an essential aspect of the therapeutic process and a common goal in counselling practice. Lisa's contribution suggests that this process of building trust and feeling safe may be facilitated by the practitioner's foreignness.

Having something in common

Apart from enhanced anonymity, participants identify that intercultural counselling may also lead to a feeling of having something in common with a client, which is understood as beneficial. For example Mary states that:

> *'I'm just working with a woman who is [nationality removed], and for her the fact that I'm from [N. America] is like a really big thing (...) really positive thing, yeah, because she's struggling to make a life here (...) she feels I'm in a similar situation to her, because I've moved over here as well' (Mary, 155-7)*

In this excerpt, Mary describes a situation where client and therapist share the experience of 'being foreign' in the host country, which seems to be received positively by a client who struggles with cultural adjustment. The client's particular experiences lie beyond the interest of this analysis and have been removed from the extract also to protect her identity. It is interesting however to note that Mary's specific choice of words and of verb tenses points to her conviction regarding the client's state ('*for her the fact...'*, '*she feels I'm in...'*). In her interview Mary has rarely expressed an assumption about her clients in such a confident way; this suggests that shared foreignness is a topic that has been overtly addressed in their work together.

Susan also identifies 'having something in common' as a beneficial aspect of intercultural counselling:

> *'...sometimes I wonder with my clients who are also transplants, so from other countries, ehm maybe there's- I sometimes I feel there might be a...shared understanding of being different even though I don't- my sec- I don't speak English as a second language, my first language- it's like there's like a mutual understanding of living somewhere different and moving to another country and having that experience' (Susan, 284-7)*

This section exposes Susan's identification with the non-native speaking foreigners in Britain, as they are all 'transplants'. This metaphor has been explored in more detail in super-ordinate theme 1. This contribution suggests that for Susan the experience of 'being a foreigner' is not associated particularly with linguistic difference, but to a

feeling of belonging, of being part of a certain system or not. Accordingly, '*moving to another country'* regardless of countries of origin, seems enough to create this feeling of connectedness. This sense of belonging and having something in common confirms Mary's experience discussed earlier, and highlights understanding of this experience as an advantage.

Promotion of discussion on diversity

Mary's above-mentioned contribution introduces another feature. While not pinpointed by Mary, the fact that difference was a subject that was discussed openly in their sessions suggests that the therapist's foreignness can promote discussions on issues of diversity and can help clients become aware of their attitudes towards difference. Lisa tackles this concept overtly. Earlier discussion pointed out her experience of working with a client who was concerned about Lisa's foreign background ('*she found that frustrating').* Despite the clients' frustration, Lisa and her client were able to work through this challenge:

> *'...something we spoke about was that that you don't necessarily need to have all these like commonalities and the similarities to to get ehm empathy from ehm or understanding in ehm and we said that every person you meet is different, they come from different backgrounds and places and... all these ideas and education so you can never like guarantee that you'll have that, so I think that was one way we kind of worked through it, and ehm we finished our sessions together' (Lisa, 156-9)*

Lisa's foreignness seems to have generated a rich discussion on issues of diversity in her work with this specific client. Specifically, Lisa and her client reached a conclusion of viewing diversity as something that does not impede communication and empathic understanding, and entered a more detailed discussion on the ubiquity of difference. The positive outcome of this encounter ('*and we finished our sessions together'*) suggests the beneficial character of the intercultural relationship despite the initial difficulties.

Genuine curiosity

Finally, Emma's account puts forward another potential benefit of her foreignness on clinical practice, namely an enhanced stance of curiosity towards the clients. This extract follows the previously presented discussion on the impact of Emma's foreignness on practice. As we saw earlier, one of the features that Emma identifies as linked with her foreignness is unfamiliarity with aspects of local culture such as geography. As a consequence of this unfamiliarity, she may need to ask for clarifications. Here she discusses how she makes sense of her clients' reactions to those clarifications:

> *'I think that they appreciate the fact that I'm asking for clarification because it shows that I'm listening and that I do want to understand where they are coming from' (Emma, 387)*

In her clients' reactions, Emma identifies an 'appreciation' of her curiosity. In her view, asking for clarifications indicates her attention ('*it shows that I'm listening'*) and her genuine interest to understand her clients' situation. Again here, Emma's contribution suggests that her foreignness might be promoting essential counselling qualities such as attentive listening and curiosity.

It is worthy of note that the benefit that Emma identifies here does not appear to be related to herself and her counselling skills (her foreignness does not enhance *her* listening skills or does not make *her* more curious) but the way these qualities are *received* by her clients ('*it shows that'*). This helped me realise that, indeed, all the benefits that the four native speaking foreign trainees spotted in their work are associated with the process and outcome of therapy rather than facilitation of their own personal and professional development.

6.3.4 Summary of Section

This last master theme presented participants' perceived benefits of intercultural practice, namely enhanced anonymity, having something in common, promoting dialogue on diversity and genuine curiosity. This was the last of the three themes that this second super-ordinate theme entailed. The other two, namely 'perceived impact' and 'complexities in practice', offered further insight into the experience of

intercultural practice and the identified impact of foreignness on practice. Specifically, findings in master theme 'perceived impact' revealed that participants understand their foreignness as 'not being an issue' for practice, pointing to a problematising attitude towards difference. Finally, in 'complexities in practice' findings offered details on the specific areas that participants perceived as influenced by their foreignness (verbal communication and familiarity with local culture). Subsequent to the completion of the presentation of participants' accounts, this chapter moves on to a discussion of these findings.

Discussion of Findings

In this section I discuss this study's findings in relation to existing relevant literature and point out its contributions to the field. Similar to study A, discussion is restricted by the lack of empirical studies in the field; findings are juxtaposed to the limited material from international students in general and international counselling trainees in particular. Findings are also discussed in relation to the literature on bilingualism in psychotherapy, pointing to the significance of viewing language use from a socio-cultural perspective, rather than a purely linguistic one. As a general rule, I refrain from making links to findings from study A (with some exceptions). This work will take place in chapter seven.

6.4 Locating the Self: On being a 'transplant'

The first super-ordinate theme of study B, presented how participants experience and interpret their foreignness in Britain in general, and in relation to their practitioner-role in particular. It encompassed two interrelated master themes, 'self as a foreigner' and 'practitioner-self as a foreigner'.

'Self as a foreigner' presented participants' accounts of feeling foreign and identifying elements of difference in the host environment in general. While not linked directly to this study's focus (beginning practice), as explained in the introduction of this chapter, this theme advanced understanding of the phenomenon of beginning intercultural practice, as participants often compared their experiences

from practice and from their outside-practice life. To retain the study's focus on counselling practice, rather than intercultural experience in general, these findings are not discussed in relation to a broader literature on cross-cultural adjustment; they are examined in the light of the literature on international student and counselling trainee experience.

Native speaking foreign participants made frequent references to differentiations between themselves and 'locals' (us and them) and pointed out three areas where they 'feel foreign' in the host environment: unfamiliarity with culture, being stereotyped and different language use. To begin with, not feeling familiarised with the host culture is a common experience for international students in general (Chen, 1999; Church, 1982; Lewthwaite, 1996; Russell, et al., 2008) and international counselling trainees in particular (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Ng & Smith, 2009), but also English-speaking foreign trainees in particular. The latter position derives from Ng's study on international trainees' trainers or supervisors who suggest that 'nationals from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, European countries and countries with primarily Western cultures' (2006, p. 5) may also struggle with relocating to a new, foreign country and may encounter difficulties with cultural immersion. This position is corroborated, to a certain extent, by my findings.

As discussed in the previous chapter, this literature links unfamiliarity with culture to encountered struggles and challenges in the host environment. This is largely related to literature on cross-cultural adjustment, which, in short, maintains that the higher the cultural similarity between home and host cultures, and the more time spent in the host country, the easier the adjustment and the intercultural experience (Lewthwaite, 1996; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Russell, et al., 2010). In this study participants discussed 'unfamiliarity with culture' as a natural element of living abroad, without however making specific references to challenges or struggles. This is aligned to Nilsson and Anderson's suggestion that 'students from English speaking countries may have an easier time adjusting to the US (...) but all international students experience some degree of cultural difference' (2004, p. 306). Also, it is similar to the experiences of participants in Ilhan, Korkut-Owen, Furr and Parikh's (2012) study, who identified 'adaptation differences' but did not report 'obvious

culture shock'. The authors associated this to their participants' 'cultural and historical bonds between Turkey and their particular countries' (2012, p. 67). Correspondingly, the foreign-born, English-speaking, western, white participants in my study discussed their perceived difference, but did not identify this as a struggle. This elucidates the particularity of this sample group and the subtlety of participants' difference, elements that will be highlighted and scrutinised at several points of this discussion.

Apart from not feeling immersed in or familiar with the host culture, experiences of feeling stereotyped were also present in participants' accounts of 'feeling foreign', corroborating, to some extent, findings from studies on international students and counselling trainees in host countries. It is worth noting a divergence, however: while international students and counselling trainees often experience stereotyping behaviours from their tutors, peers (Killian, 2001; Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Ng & Smith, 2009) and also clients (Kissil, et al., 2012), participants in this study were explicit about not having encountered any similar experiences associated with counselling training and practice (with the exception of Lisa's negative client-experience, which will be discussed under super-ordinate theme 2). This is an original finding in this area; while seemingly positive, this may also point to some particularities of this research design and sample that ought to be outlined.

To begin with, this may be a result of the limited practice experience that my participants had at the time of the interview (six to ten months), which restricted the range of client-related experiences to which they could make connections. Alternatively, it may be associated with research design-related limitations when recruiting from a small field and the same training institution (discussed in more detail in chapter four). Native speaking participants' absence of receiving stereotyping behaviours in their practice may also be linked to their 'whiteness', i.e. the invisibility of their difference. Mittal and Wieling's study pointed out that white international students experienced 'either invisibility or received privileges because of the invisibility of their differences' (2006, p. 375), while 'students of colour' reported pressure to assimilate and discriminatory behaviours. Finally, this may even reflect a difference in the local population's stance in relation to difference; as the

above-mentioned studies were US-based, this could suggest that Americans may be more prone to stereotyping behaviours than the British. Such generalising arguments cannot be supported by small-scale studies like this one, but are worth being highlighted to underline the significance of paying attention to context when conducting research.

The third area that participants identified as playing a role in 'feeling foreign' was the different use of language. Participants' accounts provided rich information on the linguistic differences they identified between themselves and locals, revealing that a key element of 'feeling foreign' is associated with different accent and more general, different language use even for speakers of the 'same' (grammatically) language. This is coherent with the view undertaken by this thesis of language being 'social' (Dewaele, 2007), 'culturally soaked' (Burck, 2004) and 'embedded in our cultural history' (Uphoff, 2011), and is also aligned with bilingual immigrants' experiences of living abroad. For example, Burck's (2005) bilingual participants pointed out that speaking a 'minoritised' language is a central marker of difference. My participants confirm this position and elaborate it by exhibiting that North American accent, the element that 'stood out the most' and 'gave away' their foreignness, can play a similar role to a 'non-native' accent. The study's location within the field of counselling and psychotherapy and its focus on counselling practice renders exploration of the literature on accent as a marker of difference beyond its scope. An acknowledgment, however, of the relevance of this field as highlighted from this study, opens a door for interdisciplinary research in this area. Overall, an understanding of the potential impact of second-language use and of 'foreign' accent is absent from existing literature in the field of counsellor education, pointing to the uniqueness of this study and therefore to its contribution to knowledge in relation to multicultural counsellor education (discussed further in chapter seven) and intercultural counselling practice in general.

To this point, the discussion revolved around participants' awareness of foreignness outside their practice and, based on the comparisons between practice and outside-practice life explained earlier, connections were made to the phenomenon under investigation. Foreignness-related experiences directly related to the practitioner-self

were presented in the second master theme of super-ordinate theme 1, namely 'practitioner-self as a foreigner'. Findings here demonstrated participants' explicit statements of not feeling foreign in the practice role, despite the previously mentioned awareness of difference in other areas of life. According to participants' explanations, cultural similarity and familiarity with the host culture, i.e. time spent in the host environment and general knowledge or understanding of local norms, are responsible for 'not feeling foreign' in practice. As explained in the previous section, this position concurs with literature on cross-cultural adaptation and the role of cultural similarity in facilitating this process (Lewthwaite, 1996; Russel, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008). While cultural similarity may indeed reduce participants' perceived foreignness and its impact on diverse aspects of life, more complicated processes may be involved here. For example, Basker and Dominguez (1984) point out that immigrant therapists are often conscious of the impact of cultural difference on their personal lives, but less aware of its influence on their professional activities, a suggestion which may also reflect my participants' experiences. The authors, however, do not problematise this 'unawareness' further. I, on the other hand, endorse Lago's (2006; 2011) preoccupation around the significance of self- and cultural-awareness in relation to counselling practice. To that end, I scrutinise my participants' duality of experience (feeling foreign in host culture yet not feeling foreign in practice) at various points in this and the following sections.

Even though participants disclosed not feeling foreign when they practise, some trainees clearly associated novice-practitioner anxiety with their foreignness. This manifests that beginning counselling practice, an already demanding process (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003; Turner, et al., 2008), is influenced by foreignness and difference even when this is not 'tangible' or concrete. In general, as discussed in study A, existing literature suggests that international counselling trainees are often anxious about their non-nativeness (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Ng & Smith, 2009). The fact that trainees who are native speakers of the language used in therapy (and therefore lack concerns around being inarticulate) still appear worried about being perceived as inadequate due to their foreignness and not understanding their clients' speech, underlines the usefulness of perceiving 'second' language use as a wider

concept that includes culture-related aspects in using a language. The relationship between anxiety in beginning practice and foreignness or non-nativeness has been advanced through findings in this study; as this understanding fed back to my understanding of study A, it will be discussed further in chapter seven.

The third sub-theme of this master theme, namely 'separating identities' presents native speaking trainees' accounts of making sense of their foreign practitioner-self and dealing with their own foreignness in practice. Findings suggest that native trainees appear to consciously separate the socio-cultural aspect of their identity from their professional one, or as Emma put it, to '*take culture out of it*', in order to be able to focus on the client's needs and process. This same position was also present in Costa and Dewaele's study (2012); the authors associated this stance to appropriate self-disclosure in counselling practice. Constantine and Kwan (2003) also suggested that intercultural counselling entails the risk of inappropriate or excessive therapist self-disclosure, which may impede therapy by shifting the focus from the client's process to the therapist. Participants in this study disclosed explicitly moderating culture-related self-disclosures in order to prevent this from happening. Therefore, in this case my participants' accounts were better understood through existing literature, and potentially corroborate this position, adding to this scholarly area.

That said, I wonder whether and to what extent my participants' stance is evoked or facilitated by participants' similarity with the host culture. Are native speaking trainees able to 'take culture out of it' because their foreignness is 'intangible'[23] and their difference to the (majority group of the) host culture is subtle? This questioning is related to my earlier doubt about participants 'not feeling foreign' in practice, but 'feeling foreign' in other aspects of their life. At the same time, I wonder whether my participants' 'avoidance' of identifying themselves as foreigners in a practice role is to some level associated with the tendency of the literature to focus on culturally

[23] The terms 'tangible/intangible' and 'concrete' foreignness or difference are selected over 'visible/invisible' (Uphoff, 2011) to move away from the tendency to focus on visibility of ethnicity.

diverse clients rather than trainees and practitioners and, in cases where foreign therapists or trainees are addressed, to focus on minority ethnic individuals. This would concur with Kissil et al.'s suggestion that the tendency of the literature to focus on culturally diverse clients and to overlook immigrants in the role of the therapist may imply that 'therapists are not affected by this cultural dimension or are perhaps capable of cultural neutrality' (2013, p. 136). As suggested earlier, this is a topic that requires attention, as awareness of the therapist's own cultural identity is vital for culturally sensitive therapeutic practice (Lago, 2006). These doubts will be elaborated through the following discussion of findings from super-ordinate theme 2.

Overall, super-ordinate theme 1 'Locating the Self' uncovered participants' twofold experience in relation to foreignness and discussed how native speaking trainees make sense of their foreignness in relation to their self and practitioner-self. In both cases, findings in this study support the existing literature on non-native speaking foreigners, illuminating the commonality of being a 'non-native' speaker, and being a 'foreign native speaker', that is, not familiarised with the culture in which one's mother tongue is being used. This points to the significance of attending to the cultural context of language and broadening the literature of 'bilingualism', to include individuals who may be foreign-born 'native' speakers of a language.

6.5 Presence of Foreignness in Practice

The second super-ordinate theme presented participants' experiences of practising abroad, with an emphasis on the actual experiences of interacting with clients rather than participants' sense-making of their foreignness and its impact on the self. 'Presence of Foreignness in Practice' encompassed three master themes: 'perceived impact', 'complexities in practice' and 'benefits of intercultural counselling'.

The first, 'Perceived impact: *It's never really been an issue*', presented how native speaking foreign trainees make sense of the impact of their foreignness on practice. As the title suggests, foreignness was not perceived to be an 'issue', that is, to impede the therapeutic process. This understanding was constructed through participants' own 'intercultural experience' (their sense-making of the therapeutic

encounter) and their 'clients' reactions' to foreignness. These two themes have been presented as separate for convenience; nevertheless, they are very much related to each other, highlighting the intersubjective character of experiencing a phenomenon, as suggested in the discussion of this thesis' epistemological position in chapter three, as well as the relational nature of counselling practice. The fact that participants' understanding of foreignness as not being an obstacle for practice derives from experiences with clients and their specific reactions is in agreement with the relevant literature pointing out that feedback from peers, tutors and mainly clients, influences trainees' self-perception of efficacy and confidence (Bischoff, et al., 2002; Howard, et al., 2006; Kissil, et al., 2013; Lee, et al., 2001). So, the fact that most clients were indifferent to participants' foreignness appears to shape the latter's understanding of foreignness as not being central in practice. Accordingly, Lisa's sole negative client-experience impacted not only on how she made sense of her foreignness, but also on her confidence. This negative experience corroborates studies maintaining that early client rejection or negative client-experience can be detrimental for novice trainees (Daniels & Larson, 2001; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

The fact that participants view their foreignness as not 'an issue' in practice unveils two phenomena: one, that participants appear to understand difference in terms of concrete or tangible traits; and two, that they conceptualise foreignness as a potential source of problems (problematising attitude). These two positions elucidate super-ordinate theme 1, i.e. trainees' dual stance and their tendency to 'separate identities' and will be elaborated next.

With regards to the first point, i.e. understanding difference through 'tangible' traits, participants' accounts seem aligned with international counselling trainees' struggles with the 'overt differences in self' such as accent and visibility of ethnicity (Mittal & Wieling, 2006), but also with the dominant discourse in the existing literature of multicultural counselling: as pointed out in chapter two, this literature focuses predominantly on specific minority ethnic groups and emphasises the visibility of ethnicity as the central element of difference and a source of complexities. Correspondingly, this study's native speaking, white, North American trainees

appear to perceive difference through the same lens, and therefore to make sense of their foreignness as 'non-difference', at least in relation to their counselling practice: since they do not look different and they do not encounter particular difficulties in intercultural communication, they do not interpret their foreignness as difference and as problematic in practice.

Participants' 'problematising attitude', that is, perceiving difference as creating difficulties has already been raised in the presentation of findings, where I briefly commented on my role in the formation or maintenance of this attitude. As disclosed in the motivation section, my own personal stance towards difference and foreignness entails a problematising nuance: doubting my own ability to train and practise as a counsellor in a second language encompasses elements of making sense of my own non-nativeness as a potential impediment to practice. Being conscious of my predisposition facilitated awareness of its potential impact on this project both in terms of engaging with participants during the interviews and analysis. While I acknowledge the inevitability of my influence on this problematising stance, close analysis of both my and my participants' contributions led me to believe that native-speaking participants (also) conceptualised foreignness in terms of concrete cultural traits (e.g. language, visibility of ethnicity) and as potentially problem-generating. Viewing foreignness and difference as a potential source of difficulties seems to concur with the tendency in the literature on international counselling trainees to focus on the investigation of struggles (Castaño, et al., 2007; Ilhan, et al., 2012; Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991; Watson, 2011) rather than exploring and presenting experiences of training in a holistic way (but see Pattison, 2003). Emphasis on struggles related to intercultural encounters may convey the message that cultural differences are problematic (Kissil, et al., 2013), which in turn can have a negative impact on multicultural counselling training and intercultural practice in general.

As argued in chapter five, identifying and disseminating foreign trainees' struggles is certainly pertinent for the enhancement of counsellor education experience and as a consequence, for the improvement of provision of services. Nonetheless, based on the findings of study B, I argue that the tendency to focus almost exclusively on minority ethnic trainees' struggles reinforces the position of difference as being

associated with tangible cultural traits such as appearance and language, as well as viewing it as a source of problems. This stance may result in restricting trainees' ability to explore their foreignness and be aware of its potential impact on practice, in cases where this does not match the above-mentioned trends. Put simply, if the literature on international counselling trainees focuses on the struggles that minority ethnic trainees encounter, other foreign trainees (like native speaking, white foreigners) may find it hard to relate to, identify and express foreignness-related experiences (and difference more generally) in training and practice. This suggestion derives from my understanding of the position of this group of participants who a) feel foreign in the host culture but not foreign in practice and b) are relatively indifferent to the impact of their foreignness on practice ('not an issue'), but are in a position to spot and discuss specific practice-related complexities related to foreignness.

These complexities were portrayed in the second master theme of super-ordinate theme 2, i.e. 'Complexities in practice: *Do you know what I'm referring to*?'. This section is especially relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, as findings here reveal native-speaking foreign trainees' distinctive experiences of practising in a foreign environment. The areas that participants identified as foreignness-associated factors impacting on practice were unfamiliarity with the host culture and verbal communication. These themes are similar to the ones identified in super-ordinate theme 1 in relation to 'self as a foreigner', namely 'unfamiliarity with culture' and 'different language use'. So even though participants identified specific reasons for feeling foreign outside practice, which they explicitly dissociated from their experience in practice, when they actually explored their practice-related experiences, they referred to the same areas (with the exception of stereotypes). This elucidates the previously identified 'dual' experience, adding to it a certain quality of ambivalence rather than division.

Having clarified this, I proceed to a more detailed discussion of the two sub-themes of the master theme 'complexities in practice'. The first, 'unfamiliarity with culture', was identified in all participants' accounts and portrayed differently across cases. The second, 'verbal communication' was introduced and discussed in only one

participant's account (divergence), indicating the difficulty perhaps of conceiving language-related differences when they perceive themselves as 'native' speakers.

'Unfamiliarity with culture' is a particularly illuminating sub-theme, offering rich details of intercultural counselling practice. Participants' 'intangible' difference (the fact that they did not consider themselves as particularly different) allowed them to go beyond the experiences commonly reported by non-native speaking or visibly diverse trainees and to elucidate a unique perspective, advancing this body of literature. While literature on immigrant therapists' (Barreto, 2013) and international counselling trainees' experiences (Henfield, et al., 2011; Ilhan, et al., 2012; Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Ng & Smith, 2009) associate difference with issues of cultural adjustment even for western, foreign trainees (Ng, 2006), they do not connect it to intercultural practice. This means that while the literature points out that foreign trainees encounter difficulties in their outside-counselling life with regards to cultural difference, it does not explicate the interrelated complexities of this for practice. Even when this connection is made, the literature points generally to misunderstandings and to a requirement for more effort (Morris & Lee, 2004), without however providing explanations of what is the source or the impact of misunderstandings.

Findings in this study provide profound illustrations of these phenomena. Participants' experiences indicate that native speaking foreigners may not be familiar with local geography, which might distract them momentarily or influence their ability to connect to the client's story. Similarly, they may not be familiar with local history facts and therefore lack a shared 'point of reference' with the client. Difference in norms and values (such as parenting and drinking habits) between the two cultures may also be present and influence the counselling process or relationship. Finally, unfamiliarity with gender roles in the host culture may also lead to misunderstandings or facilitate the emergence of preconceptions. All these features are details that studies on international (non-native speaking) and minority ethnic counselling trainees (including study A in this thesis) have not been able to bring to the surface, due to preoccupation with more 'tangible' elements of difference such as language and visibility of ethnicity that may impact more

evidently in counselling practice. Nonetheless, these details came to light exactly because '*the culture is very similar in many ways'* and participants were compelled to think of their foreignness in an original, resourceful way instead of reproducing existing discourses about cultural difference. In that sense, native speaking participants have given insight into a unique perspective, substantiating the significance of the idiographic character of this project.

Idiography has also allowed divergence to emerge. As pointed out in the presentation of findings, Mary has identified and discussed fairly thoroughly the impact of her foreignness on verbal communication within counselling practice, which constructed the second sub-theme in this section. Morris and Lee suggested that non-native speaking trainees may not only encounter difficulties in terms of linguistic structures and grammar rules but also with 'language in the context of culture' (2004, p. 308). Mary's experience demonstrates how the latter experience can be also present for a native-speaking, foreign trainee. Her contribution points out that a native-speaking trainee may encounter struggles with understanding clients, due to differences in relation to the interlocutors' accents and use of language (slang, idioms, colloquialisms), elements that are associated with socio-cultural traits of language rather than grammatical ones. Her experience is very similar to accounts of non-native trainees (both in other studies and findings from study A), confirming the notion that linguistic difference is not 'dictated by' grammatical rules (Davies, 2003). When these complexities are encountered by a 'native speaker', it becomes evident that nativeness/non-nativeness are indeed relative concepts, better understood from a more inclusive perspective, as suggested in chapter two. This is supported also by Ng's work, which suggests that even trainees who are native English speakers may experience difficulties in communication due to 'cultural differences in word usage, accent, and colloquialisms' (2006, p. 13). To conclude, the centrality of linguistic difference in Mary's account, in conjunction with other participants' similar experiences outside the counselling environment (super-ordinate theme 1), elucidate the socio-cultural aspect of language and authenticate my decision to include native speaking foreigners in a project that is primarily concerned with practice and

language use in a foreign cultural setting, adding to the existing body of literature an original experience.

The final master theme of this second super-ordinate theme presented the 'benefits of intercultural counselling' as identified by native speaking foreign participants. As explained elsewhere, I deliberately refrained from initiating conversations on struggles and advantages to avoid replicating the trend in existing literature of interpreting experience through a lens of advantages versus struggles (e.g. Morris & Lee, 2004). Nonetheless, participants made references to benefits from practising in a foreign culture. As pointed out in the presentation of findings, native speaking foreign trainees put forward benefits for the *therapeutic outcome and process* rather than making links to their own personal and professional development. This trend is aligned with some bilingual therapists' experiences of practising in a second language, who pointed out that being a non-native speaking practitioner facilitates unique language-based interpretations (Jiménez, 2004) and equalises the power asymmetries between counsellor and client (Barreto, 2013; Kitron, 1992), but who did not address the beneficial nature of this process for their selves and their practitioner-selves.

Participants in my study identified different advantages for the clients and practice, enriching the existing limited body of literature. Specifically, my participants suggested that being unfamiliar with the clients' (and the host) culture can provide an additional level of anonymity to the therapeutic dyad; the therapist can be perceived as more neutral, facilitating the clients' building of trust and feeling of not being judged, advancing the therapeutic progress. Moreover, the therapist's foreignness may stimulate discussion on diversity and help the client's awareness of their attitudes towards difference. Finally, it can offer an opportunity for connectedness with foreign clients through the experience of 'having something in common', as well as promote the therapists' genuine curiosity. These two last experiences were also identified as a benefits in Kissil et al.'s (2013) work, in Karamat Ali's (2004) account of working as a bilingual therapist and in Barreto's (2013) study on immigrant therapists' accounts of intercultural practice.

Overall, super-ordinate theme 2 illustrated that native speaking foreign trainees do not encounter particular struggles and obstacles in their practice because they are foreign. Nonetheless, they do make links between their foreignness and their counselling practice, either in terms of complexities or in terms of advantages. To conclude, the richness of this theme, and particularly of the sub-theme on 'benefits', suggests that even though native speaking participants do not feel particularly 'foreign' when practising in Britain, their foreignness is still present, influencing the intercultural counselling encounter and upon reflection, participants in this study are able to recognise it.

6.6 Concluding discussion for study B

In the previous two sections I have discussed in detail the findings generated from study B, which explored the experiences of native speaking, foreign-born counselling trainees beginning their counselling practice in Britain. I made specific links to the relevant bodies of literature and highlighted how specific themes advanced those. In this concluding section I outline the overall findings of this study and discuss the ways in which study B contributes to the field of intercultural counselling research.

A key and multifaceted finding of study B was native speaking foreign participants' ambivalent stance, i.e. feeling foreign in the host culture, but not in their counselling practice. In relation to that, the study revealed that despite participants' perceived 'non-foreignness' in relation to practice, their accounts reveal rich experiences of foreignness-related features present in their practice, influencing the intercultural encounter either by complicating it or benefiting it. The respective themes that supported and illuminated this finding were discussed earlier. Here I focus on the implications of such a finding.

First of all, as argued earlier, this ambivalence suggests an understanding of difference as problematic, an attitude that entails a twofold hazard. On one hand it reinforces existing scholarly discourses around difference that view it as concrete and visible, and which ultimately focus on how to assimilate diversity and overcome problems that concrete difference may create, rather than explore its potential in

more depth and to a fuller range, a step that this study has achieved. Native-speaking trainees in this study were able to move beyond this 'problematising attitude', to identify and discuss the presence of their foreignness in practice. In fact, as a result of the 'difference of their difference' (the fact that they are not minority ethnic or non-native speaking individuals like most subjects in existing literature), their contributions exceeded the common experiences of international students, counselling trainees and therapists found in the literature, yielding new insight into the phenomenon of beginning intercultural practice. For example, the fact that they were culturally similar, but also diverse, allowed for subtle elements like unfamiliarity with local culture, geography and social connotations of backgrounds to emerge, which are all elements that were new to the literature.

At the same time, viewing difference as problematic involves the risk of ignoring difference that is 'un-problematic'. Ignoring difference when it does not create any problems, however, can easily lead to an assumption of sameness and ultimately to what can be described as 'cultural-unawareness'. That said I do not wish to imply that (and did not intend to assess whether) participants in this study exhibited signs of cultural unawareness. Yet, based on my participants' ambivalent accounts, I wish to highlight this possibility, which may well be reinforced by the literature's failure to explore difference in terms other than the interrelated struggles and problematic situations. The significance of cultural-awareness for counselling practice has been highlighted in various parts of this thesis. As explained, this process is particularly pertinent for multicultural counsellor education and intercultural practice and will be discussed again in the section of 'implications for training' in chapter seven. Apart from these specific suggestions, however, study B contributes to the field in a more general manner, i.e. by pointing to the risk of ignoring 'intangible' difference and drawing attention to this in the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

This leads to another key finding and contribution of this study, which is associated with its methodological approach and its research design. The study's idiographic nature on the one hand and its focus on language use of a group of native-speaking foreigners on the other illuminates the (significance of the) socio-cultural aspect of language, particularly for a language-intensive profession such as counselling. The

fact that native English speakers are able to recognise and discuss different language use as an element of foreignness exhibits the pertinence of viewing nativeness/non-nativeness from a broader perspective that takes into consideration the cultural as well as the linguistic elements of a language (Davies, 2003; Faez, 2011; Park, 2007). On one level, this validates the research design of this study, demonstrating the usefulness of including native speaking foreigners in the investigation of intercultural experience in general, and in counsellor training and practice in particular. Ultimately however, this demonstrates the relevance of the literature on bilingualism and second-language use to individuals who may be native-speaking but foreign, putting forward a potential for expanding this field and creating new bridges for interdisciplinary research.

6.7 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I have presented the findings of the second study that contributes to this research project, namely, study B, which explored the experiences of native-speaking foreign trainees who begin their counselling practice in Britain. The presentation of findings was followed by discussions of the respective super-ordinate themes, namely 'Locating the Self' and 'Presence of Foreignness in Practice', which underlined each theme's contribution to existing literature. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the overall study's main findings and contributions to knowledge. The following chapter (seven) brings the two studies, namely A and B, under the same spotlight, aiming to synthesise findings and provide an overall conclusion for this thesis.

Chapter 7: Synthesis and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

Chapters five and six have provided insight into non-native and native-speaking foreign counselling trainees' experiences of beginning practice in a second language and culture and indicated how these relate to and advance existing literature. In this chapter I bring findings from studies A and B under the same lens, with the aim of advancing understanding of the overall phenomenon under examination. This process of 'synthesis' invites the reader to 'zoom out' from the specifics of participants' experiences, which have been the focus of the previous two chapters, and engage in a more broad, theoretical discussion on beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice in Britain. I begin this chapter with a summary of findings from each study, to set the scene. I then move to the section of 'synergy', where I elucidate overarching themes. This discussion leads to this thesis' conclusions. A section that links research questions to the thesis' findings follows this to illustrate the coherence of this project. Implications for counselling training are discussed next. Finally, a section on this project's key limitations leads to suggestions for future research. This chapter concludes with a note on the thesis' overall contribution to knowledge.

7.2 Summary of Findings

Findings from the first super-ordinate theme of study A, 'It's a huge challenge' suggest that non-native speaking participants encounter several difficulties when practising in a second language and culture. These are mostly associated with trainees' 'non-nativeness', that is, with being a non-native speaker, although unfamiliarity with culture and ethnic difference are also relevant. This divulges the exacerbated demanding character of counsellor education for non-native speaking, international students. As indicated by the second super-ordinate theme 'This is something I found really helpful', participants identify two types of facilitative factors: coping attitudes and external sources, such as supervision and support from

other non-native speakers who are 'in the same boat'. This demonstrates that non-native speaking trainees have a mixture of available support sources to manage the complexities of intercultural/interlinguistic practice. Finally, the third super-ordinate theme 'I'm different but this is not stopping me' suggests that participants perceive themselves as competent practitioners, identify advantages in the intercultural encounter and view counselling as something that exceeds words. This theme illustrates the positive nature of intercultural counselling and trainees' satisfaction from practice.

Findings in the first super-ordinate theme of study B, 'Locating the self', demonstrate that native speaking participants 'feel foreign' in the host culture, but do not have the same experience in a therapeutic role. This ambivalent stance suggests that difference is largely conceptualised in terms of concrete, tangible features that are anticipated to generate problems in intercultural practice. Even though they do not 'feel foreign', participants make connections between anxiety and their foreignness and disclose that they engage in activities that aim to reduce the impact of their foreignness in practice ('separating identities'). Super-ordinate theme 2 yields insight into the 'presence of foreignness in practice', revealing that even though participants' foreignness is not 'an issue', that is, an impediment for practice, it is present and influences the counselling process either by complicating trainees' understanding and interactions with clients (due to unfamiliarity with culture, linguistic differences) or by facilitating it (benefits). This demonstrates participants' ability to reflect upon their difference in relation to practice and to identify its multifaceted impact.

7.3 Synergy: Elucidating Overarching Themes Through Process

As explicitly stated in chapter four, this thesis neither intends to compare and contrast findings from the two studies that comprise it, nor is it interested in identifying similarities and differences in the accounts of native and non-native speaking trainees. Such practices would invite generalising comments for the wider

population of foreign counselling trainees and the respective sub-groups of native and non-native speakers in counsellor education; this would conflict with the idiographic, exploratory nature of this investigation, as well as with its ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations that value subjective, contextualised experience. As described in chapter four, the aim of conducting two sub-studies was to promote an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. To that end, this section brings together the findings of the two studies in a discussion that elucidates overarching themes through *synergy*.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2013) defines *synergy*, from the Greek roots *syn* (=together) and *ergon* (=work), as 'the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects'. Therefore, while I may refer to ideas and themes that were introduced in the two previous chapters, here I discuss how these were advanced through interplay of the two sets of findings. The aim of this section is first, to present concluding overarching themes; secondly, to exhibit how these themes were mutually developed; and thirdly, to demonstrate how the interface between the two studies advanced understanding of the overall phenomenon. To that end, each theme-section includes a consideration of process, that is, of the respective themes of study A and B that compose it and how I came to understand those as an overarching theme, and includes a discussion of their potential meaning by offering contextual interpretations and an examination of the significance of these themes for the relevant literature and the field. Thus, this section is as equally devoted to content as it is to process. This is in line with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' commitment to transparency and reflexivity as elements that advance a project's integrity and quality (Larkin & Thomson, 2012; Shinebourne, 2011; Smith, 2011a; Smith, et al., 2009). With this in mind, in this section I emphasise the iterative process of doing IPA rather than present conclusions as a result of neat and linear analysis; this illustrates the Heideggerian concept of the hermeneutic cycle, where the part advances understanding of the whole and vice versa (Smith, 2011b; Smith, et al., 2009). Finally, this section demonstrates the value of incorporating study B in

this research design. Though generation and analysis of data from native-speaking, foreign trainees was a more ambiguous process due to absence of existing literature and the 'intangibility' of their foreignness, it will become clear that this dataset has proved to be a particularly elucidating factor for the overall project.

I have identified four overarching themes for the phenomenon of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. These are: 'duality of experience: self and practice', 'struggles and benefits: from deficit to asset', 'negotiating difference intersubjectively: reconceptualising foreignness' and 'revisiting non-nativeness in counselling'. These should not be understood as distinct from each other; this division offers structure to the section and facilitates the reader's understanding, by focusing individually on diverse aspects of a multifaceted experience.

7.3.1 Duality of Experience: Self and Practice

This first overarching theme is relatively broad and relates to a general tendency in participants' way of making sense of their experience. Although different in content, the two groups' accounts revealed a 'structural' commonality. Both non-native and native speakers distinguished between foreignness-related experiences regarding their self (Study A: Experience related to self: 'It's a huge challenge', study B: Locating the self: On being a 'transplant') and their experiences in relation to practice (study A: 'I'm different but this is not stopping me', study B: Presence of foreignness in practice). Findings composing these themes reveal that foreign trainees in this study overall disclose that practice is not impeded by the therapist's difference; on the contrary, they identify a variety of advantages, despite the various practical complexities inherent in intercultural/interlinguistic communication. At the same time, when turning their gaze to the impact that foreignness and non-nativeness may have on themselves, foreign trainees reveal that beginning practice is a demanding process that generates complexities, anxiety and is related to low self-confidence, even when the difference is subtle.

When I generated the super-ordinate themes for study B and realised the similarity to the structure of the themes in study A, I contemplated whether this mirrored my understanding of others' experiences as divided between self and practice, rather

than participants' accounts. While I acknowledge that interpretations and, therefore, super-ordinate themes reflect the researcher's understanding, I wanted to ensure that these were not externally imposed but rooted in the data (Smith, et al., 2009). Further reflection and engagement with the data helped me realise that these themes (also) mirrored participants' sense-making of their counselling experience. Next I discuss what this might reveal about participants' experiences, as well as the potential implications of this for future research in the field.

Participants' tendency to discuss separately personal process and practice may be associated with their trainee-practitioner role. Counsellor training involves developing the ability to consider the client's needs and process, while simultaneously being aware of one's own process and personal state (Mearns & Thorne, 2007; Scaife, 2010). This twofold process is also the focus of clinical supervision, which prompts (novice) practitioners to focus on the client and on what happens in sessions (external reflection), but also to turn the focus on their self and notice thoughts and feelings in relation to practice (Hawkins & Shohet, 2013). Hence, trainees are 'acculturated into' exploring their practice-related experiences by distinguishing between personal process and outcome. On one level, this realisation can be particularly useful for future research on this population: designing projects and structuring interview schedules by taking into consideration this duality of experience may facilitate interviewees' exploration processes and therefore lead to richer data. More importantly however, this duality and, in fact, the variation between the respective experiences, point to the multifacetedness of this phenomenon, and highlight the need to adopt appropriate research methods to capture this. As argued earlier, existing research focuses on trainees' struggles or therapeutic outcome, falling short of highlighting subjective experiences of satisfaction from practice, self-efficacy and identification of benefits, which, as demonstrated by this study, are an important component of this phenomenon. Therefore the 'duality of self and practice' identified in this study, exhibits that beginning intercultural counselling practice is a multidimensional phenomenon that ought to be explored as such to be 'fully' understood.

7.3.2 Struggles and Benefits: From Deficit to Asset

This theme consists of a number of ideas already discussed in chapters five and six, which are clarified and refined into a concluding theme here. The main idea is that foreign counselling trainees participating in this project made sense of their experiences in terms of struggles or problems (study A: 'It's a huge challenge', study B: 'It's never really been an issue') and benefits (study A: Benefits of foreignness, study B: Benefits of intercultural counselling). This is in line with the duality of trainees' experiences in terms of self and practice. Once more, without renouncing my role in the reinforcement of this model of thinking, in this section I explore what this tendency might reveal about participants, as well as its potential meaning for the wider field of intercultural counselling.

In general, non-nativeness and foreignness were perceived as a source of problems both practically (linguistic barriers, misunderstandings, unfamiliarity with culture) and emotionally (anxiety, confidence) for both groups of trainees; yet, these were encountered mainly at a personal level (self) and were not obstacles for practice. Participants' accounts exhibited self-efficacy; they identified a variety of benefits of their difference for practice and the self. Each of these 'poles' (problem versus benefit) offers insight into diverse aspects of foreign trainees' accounts; next, these are discussed in more depth.

Starting with the struggles, beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice was experienced as an anxiety generating process, a fact that pointed to an interrelation between trainees' 'foreign' and 'novice practitioner' identities. As argued in chapter five, findings initially suggested that novice-practitioner anxiety is exacerbated by foreignness and non-nativeness, a position suggested also by relevant literature (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). Chapter six however, made me reconsider this and reach a different understanding of this relation: some native-speaking foreign trainees were also worried about beginning practice, and linked this concern explicitly to their foreignness (e.g. stereotypes, unfamiliarity with culture) and some even with linguistic difference, even though they did not encounter any 'issues' in their practice. From this it can be suggested that each group of trainees seems to

'justify' or 'rationalise' their novice-practitioner anxiety through the element that they identify as a potential 'deficit' (foreignness or non-nativeness) rather than actually encounter an intensified situation. Hence, beginning practice anxiety might not be *exacerbated* by difference as initially suggested; foreignness or non-nativeness may offer a platform for trainees to express an underlying beginning-practice anxiety in a more 'justifiable' or acceptable manner.

Foreign trainees 'problematising attitude', that is, the idea that difference is a source of problems especially when it is 'tangible' was a central element of the 'struggles' side of the binary. This understanding was reached based on native speaking trainees' accounts and the concept was discussed in chapter six. What I want to focus on here is how this realisation advanced my understanding of study A participants' accounts, which, as I came to see it, in essence confirm the position of viewing 'tangible' difference as a source of problems. Influenced by my own challenges with non-nativeness (chapter one) and the literature's tendency to focus on bilinguals' struggles (chapter two), I did not problematise the generation of the theme 'It's a huge challenge' in study A. Talking about challenges when asked to describe the experience of being a non-native speaker in a language-intensive activity seemed natural. This, however, prevented me from seeing the impact that such a position might have for counselling training and practice. Through the native speakers' accounts, I revisited study A and gained a new perspective on non-native speaking trainees' references to their non-nativeness as a 'weakness', even though they did not really experience impediments in practice. I realised that this depicted a stance of perceiving difference, and particularly non-nativeness, as a deficit, which was mostly an expectation or an internalised belief than an actual experience.

This indicates the influence of existing literature and discourse in shaping trainees' expectations but also self-perceptions of difference and by extension, illustrates the potential power of new research in altering these established positions. If existing literature emphasises difficulties associated with intercultural counselling, it is natural that foreign trainees, who engage with this literature as part of their education, perceive their foreignness as problematic. This stance is not necessarily constructive, especially during this demanding phase of developing a practitioner

identity. This problem, however, becomes even more acute if one attends to the multiple ways in which trainees may reproduce such unconstructive positions to the community. An obvious manifestation of this is through their practice with (foreign) clients; a less apparent way is through their participation in research, both as informants and researchers. In any case, foreign trainees' 'problematising attitude' may play into society, forming a vicious circle that reinforces an unconstructive stance of viewing difference as problematic. In a world as multicultural as the one we currently live in, this can only increase the chasm between clients and practitioners from different backgrounds and nurture more complexities in intercultural counselling. Therefore, it needs to be addressed adequately in counsellor education. I will come back to this point when I discuss 'implications for training'.

I now move on to discuss the 'benefits' side of the binary both with regard to process and to the potential implications for the field. Findings from studies A and B reveal participants' frequent references to benefits from their difference in practice. The richness of these accounts, as well as participants' 'eagerness' to ensure that these were explicit (discussed in chapter five), led me to think that trainees needed to make sense of the demanding process they were going through in a positive way, revealing another coping strategy for managing anxiety and gaining confidence. This could also be related to the trainees' developing practitioner self which might be in search of external validation (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003), either from me or readers of this thesis[24]. Trainees' identification and discussion of a number of advantages of their non-nativeness or foreignness could also point to a possible need to come across as competent despite their 'deficit'. While this matched study A participants' accounts, it did not always fit native-speaking participants who, because of the intangibility of their difference, did not necessarily perceive themselves as deficient. The fact that this second group also discussed extensively the advantages of their foreignness for practice made me contemplate the possibility of this being related to a more general component of trainees' identities, such as the learning that

[24] This will be further discussed in the 'limitations' section at the end of this chapter.

counsellors acquire through their training. Given counsellor education's particular focus on self-awareness and working with one's self, it could be possible that participants reveal a valuing of making positive use of something troubling and adopting a stance of moving from 'deficit to asset'. Such a stance could depict trainees' process of working towards their personal and professional development through their difference. This is one of the cases where discussion of the particular values of the specific context (training institution) in which my participants are acculturated might have potentially advanced this understanding, and which, as explained in chapter four, is omitted to protect participants' identity.

Irrespective of the 'real' reasons behind this theme, foreign trainees recognise that foreignness or non-nativeness may advance their practice and the overall therapeutic encounter, and are in a position to give specific examples of such benefits from their client work. Given the extensive discussion held above about the detrimental impact that viewing difference as problematic may have on intercultural counselling in general, participants' tendency to attend to and identify such benefits in their work is likely to contribute towards an alteration of an established 'problematising attitude' in relation to difference. Following the above-mentioned argument, focusing on positive aspects of this increasing phenomenon can not only advance foreign trainee experience, but also promote the overall field by gradually altering the unilateral emphasis on struggles and understanding of difference as problematic.

7.3.3 Negotiating Difference Intersubjectively: Re-conceptualising Foreignness

The third overarching theme is related to foreign trainees' tendency to negotiate[25] their difference intersubjectively. The concept of intersubjectivity was introduced in chapter two and elaborated in chapter three, where I argued in favour of a 'reality' based on subjective experiences, as these are co-constructed with (or in relation to) others intersubjectively. With this in mind, my active role in identifying an

[25] The verb 'negotiate' has been selected over 'manage' or 'handle' to denote some extent of internal processing alongside a sense of agency.

overarching theme of intersubjectivity is not questioned. At the same time, by indicating its presence in participants' accounts, I will demonstrate that this is also grounded in the data, and represents my participants' experiences.

In study A, non-native speaking trainees discussed their 'strategies' for managing the difference-related struggles they encounter in their practice. In particular, they disclosed a combination of personal 'coping attitudes' such as acceptance of difference, as well as 'external support' from supervision and discussions with peers 'in the same boat', that is, other foreigners. Participants in study B did not refer explicitly to ways of managing their difference and minimising their foreignness-related anxiety, possibly because, as explained, they did not 'feel foreign' and they did not encounter any 'issues' in relation to their practice. Nonetheless, they referred to 'separating identities', that is, an active 'fading' of their socio-cultural identity when in a professional role. Although not a conscious strategy of managing difference, this reveals participants' agency towards accommodating their foreignness in relation to counselling practice.

The above-mentioned themes exhibit interplay between inner processes and external situations, demonstrating the interrelatedness of self and other when negotiating difference. The component that really illuminates this theme, however, is participants' references to actual experiences of client-work, which function as a key source of reassurance and facilitate their sense-making of difference in relation to intercultural practice. In study A this is obvious through the theme 'self-efficacy' which is composed of the themes 'fears not coming true' and 'client feedback', demonstrating an evaluation of efficacy based on experiences from clinical practice that disprove fears of rejection and on positive feedback from clients. Correspondingly, participants in study B make similar connections: their perception of difference 'not being an issue' for practice is constructed through their 'intercultural experience' (interaction with clients in a foreign setting), and through their clients' predominantly neutral reactions to their foreignness. It becomes clear that foreign trainees base their understanding of (the impact of) their difference on interactions with clients and on internal processing of those experiences. This shows the interplay between self and other, intersubjectivity, in foreign trainees' negotiation

of difference in relation to practice. The intersubjective nature of negotiating difference will be further discussed in the implications for training section. As I will argue, the importance of others in negotiating and becoming aware of difference can be particularly useful for multicultural counselling training. Overall, however, this leads to a reconceptualisation of 'foreignness' (and difference) as dependent on specific contexts and bound to relations with others, rather than an externally attributed 'quality' that can be assumed to be based on different ethnicity or nationality. Given the globalised world in which the profession of counselling operates, such an understanding can be pertinent to intercultural therapeutic practice but also research in this area.

7.3.4 Revisiting Non-nativeness in Counselling

The final overarching theme is concerned with the role of 'second' language use in intercultural practice. As the title suggests, in this section I discuss how participants' accounts elucidate the concept of 'non-nativeness', that is, of being a non-native speaker, in a counselling setting. Given that this thesis was designed to explore linguistic difference, the emergence of a theme on nativeness/non-nativeness does not come as a surprise. Its content however, remains grounded in participants' accounts, mirroring their subjective experiences. That said, to ensure that I do not silence aspects of my participants' accounts, I stress once more that both native and non-native speaking trainees discussed the impact that 'not being from here' (Kissil, et al., 2013), that is, of being unfamiliar with the tacit knowledge inherent in a culture (irrespective of language use), may have on understanding and working effectively with clients.

With regards to (linguistic) non-nativeness, participants in study A discussed extensively language-related issues in their counselling practice: super-ordinate theme 1 'it's a huge challenge' was largely associated with non-nativeness from an 'inflexible' perspective, i.e. with non-native-like (linguistic) mastery of a language. Participants in this study talked about the practical struggles they encountered in relation to understanding and to self-expression and how these impacted on themselves in terms of anxiety and confidence. Close analysis of their accounts,

however, revealed that linguistic difference was also associated with unfamiliarity with culture. This was clarified by study B: although 'native' speakers, that is, with a native-like mastery of the language, this group of participants identified linguistic diversity between their use of English and that of local people in the host environment. In particular, they disclosed that one of the key components in 'feeling foreign' was related to 'different language use' (e.g. accent and speech mannerisms). This exhibits the central role that language plays in the formation of a 'foreign' identity and a sense of belonging, as suggested by the relevant literature on bilingualism (Burck, 2004; 2005; Dewaele, 2007; 2003; Uphoff, 2011). Regarding language use in counselling practice, participants in study B identified 'verbal communication' as a key aspect of 'complexities in practice' and discussed differences in accents and unfamiliarity with regional expressions, similarly to the non-native speakers' accounts. This illuminates a non-native-like use of a mother tongue as a consequence of unfamiliarity with the culture in which the language is used, and puts forward the suggestion that viewing foreign native speakers in the same terms as non-native speakers may be apposite, at least for a language-intensive profession such as counselling.

This underlines the necessity of revisiting the use of 'non-nativeness' in the counselling field by making the boundaries more permeable between uses of language. As pointed out in chapter two, the literature that addresses second-language use in psychotherapy views it from a strictly linguistic perspective of non-native-like proficiency in terms of vocabulary and grammar, limiting its usefulness in today's globalised world. Therefore I suggest that the field of counselling and psychotherapy can benefit from viewing nativeness/non-nativeness as a dynamic, context-bound and intersubjectively negotiated term that is not restricted only to linguistic traits, following the advances in the literature beyond the field of psychotherapy (Cook, 2003; Dewaele, 2007; Faez, 2011; Park, 2007). Associating 'non-nativeness' with 'foreignness', that is, different language use with belonging to a specific context would invite attention to language use in intercultural counselling and would hence advance this under-researched field.

Nonetheless, this suggestion entails also a danger. Throughout this thesis I have argued in favour of the need to conduct more research on linguistic diversity as an aspect of cultural difference, and particularly to explore non-native speakers' experiences of training and practice. My suggestion now to broaden 'non-nativeness' (as represented in the literature) and expand it beyond the boundaries of 'linguistic elements' should not be seen as counter to my initial position, but as an attempt to reinforce it. I am aware that by suggesting the concept's expansion, I run the risk of promoting a 'blurring' of focus that may render research in this area impossible. If nativeness/non-nativeness is not determined by language categories, then language use could always be non-native, as no two individuals will ever use language in exactly the same way. While I would, theoretically, endorse such an idea, in practice I am conscious that it loses its applicability and therefore fails to promote research and knowledge. To that end, my suggestion for revisiting non-nativeness and making the boundaries more permeable based on context-dependent and intersubjective negotiations, is inextricably linked to an appeal for context-specific research on specific populations and phenomena. This will be further advanced in my 'suggestions for future research' section.

7.4 Conclusions: Towards an Understanding of Beginning Intercultural/Interlinguistic Practice

The preceding section offered a comprehensive discussion of the overarching themes that can be concluded from study A and study B of this thesis. As this discussion was equally committed to content, process and contributions to the field, in this section I provide a synopsis of the main conclusions of this thesis. Given this thesis' commitment to idiography, these conclusions function as a platform for a broader understanding of the phenomenon under examination, without, however, diminishing the importance of the details presented in chapters five and six. Hence, the four overarching themes offer a framework towards a better understanding of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice, while the discussions of the respective studies offer insight into the particularities of this phenomenon.

Overall it can be concluded that foreign counselling trainees who begin practice in a second language and culture go through a multidimensional experience that encompasses various aspects. First of all, foreign trainees may make sense of this phenomenon by distinguishing between experiences related to the self and experiences directly associated with practice. To that end, foreign trainees may come across a number of difficulties and anxieties at a personal level, but perceive themselves as competent and appear satisfied by their practice. Also, while they may not 'feel foreign' in a counselling role, they acknowledge the presence of their foreignness in practice. This 'division' between self and practice is also mirrored in their tendency to identify problems on the one hand and advantages on the other, demonstrating an understanding of difference as problematic, but also as something that can be potentially beneficial through appropriate use. So, trainees appear to work towards a shift from 'deficit to asset', revealing that their personal and professional development is inextricably linked to their difference. Trainees identify the presence of their difference in the counselling setting and its impact on the process. Nonetheless, the 'clarity' of this understanding seems related to the 'concreteness' of difference: trainees who have a 'tangible' difference (such as language or visibility of ethnicity) appear more conscious of the various ways in which this influences the self and practice, while trainees whose 'foreign identity' is not explicit seem less preoccupied by this matter. This appears related to the absence of specific challenges, but also to internalised expectations and other people's responses to their difference. Therefore foreignness appears to be negotiated and understood intersubjectively, that is, through foreign trainees' interactions with supervisors, peers and clients and their own internal processing of these encounters. This reflects the centrality of existing discourses on difference and diversity in society in general, but primarily within the context of counselling training for foreign trainees' negotiation of difference. As a consequence, a need for alteration of unconstructive existing positions related to difference becomes evident.

Finally, foreign trainees' accounts reveal the centrality of linguistic and cultural difference for counselling practice. On the one hand, trainees disclose that unfamiliarity with the local culture influences greatly the therapeutic process, for

example in relation to understanding the client's context and taking things for granted. This is an important, but rather unsurprising conclusion inherent in intercultural practice. The most original conclusion of this study, however, lies in the illumination of the socio-cultural aspect of language use for counselling practice, which calls for an expansion of the concept of (linguistic) non-nativeness in this field. This thesis' findings illuminate the pertinence of 'second' language use to the formation of one's (professional) identity and the hazards of ignoring this due to a narrow understanding of nativeness/non-nativeness based on purely linguistic terms as suggested by the literature, a risk particularly significant for counselling training and practice that require self- and cultural-awareness.

To conclude, the trainee's difference may not impede practice, yet it impacts greatly on the self and the formation of identity, both of which play a vital role in adequate counselling practice. Therefore foreign trainees' linguistic and cultural difference is an essential topic for multicultural counselling training and intercultural counselling practice, demonstrating the need for more research on trainees' subjective experiences rather than assessment of therapeutic outcome. The findings and conclusions of this exploratory thesis provide a firm basis to advance knowledge in this area. Specific implications for counselling training will be provided to further advance this thesis' contribution to the field. Prior to this, however, I incorporate a section that links this thesis' findings to its research questions and illustrates the project's coherence.

7.5 Linking Findings to Research Questions

Findings have been presented and discussed in detail in chapters five and six, and in an overarching manner earlier in this chapter. Discussion in this section focuses on whether research questions have been answered satisfactorily, outlining briefly the ways in which this was achieved. As pointed in chapter two, the main research question: '**what are foreign counselling trainees' distinctive experiences of working in a second language and culture?'** was broken down into three sub-questions that facilitated its exploration:

- **What happens in beginning interlinguistic/intercultural practice?**
- **How do novice foreign trainees make sense of these experiences?**
- **How do they negotiate intercultural/interlinguistic practice?**

The first and second sub-questions are considered here jointly. Following my epistemological position of viewing experience as interpreted and co-constructed, an attempt to separate 'experiences' from 'sense-making of experiences' would be limiting. The third sub-question involves a relatively distinct quality (of agency or process) and therefore will be discussed separately.

With regard to the first two questions, study A was particularly informative, providing detailed experiences of intercultural and interlinguistic practice. Non-native speakers related easily to the questions asked, appeared aware of the intercultural nature of their counselling practice and shared specific experiences from their client work. They also provided information on specific elements of counselling practice (empathy, the therapeutic relationship) and discussed those in relation to foreignness and non-nativeness. Study B also contributed to this question, in a more indirect way. Native speakers appeared less conscious of the impact of their foreignness on practice potentially due to the complexity of reflecting upon and discussing 'intangible' elements of difference and foreignness, as well as an endorsed 'problematising attitude' reinforced by existing literature. Close analysis however, illuminated a number of distinctive experiences of intercultural practice for this group of trainees as well (complexities in practice). Hence the first two research sub-questions have been answered satisfactorily by this project's findings.

The next sub-question, 'how do foreign trainees negotiate intercultural/interlinguistic practice?' has also been addressed adequately by the two studies in this thesis. Overall, findings demonstrate that foreign trainees have various ways of negotiation, both purposeful and unconscious, that help them address the unique demands of beginning practice. Following the enhanced awareness of their foreignness, non-native speakers have contributed towards this question through their narrations of receiving external support from supervisors and peers, as well as developing coping

attitudes (acceptance). Native speaking trainees have also enriched this question even though they did not discuss specific challenges that required accommodation like the first group. Through discussions on 'separating identities', they revealed the ways in which they negotiate their foreignness in counselling practice. In addition to these themes, foreign counselling trainees' accounts unveil the importance of the actual interactions with clients and the feedback (not necessarily explicit) that they receive in this setting for the negotiation of difference in intercultural/interlinguistic practice.

The final research question derived from the literature's shortage in addressing the intersection of trainees' socio-cultural and professional identities, which, given the centrality of the therapist's use of self in practice, are particularly pertinent to counselling in a globalised setting:

'**How does linguistic and/or cultural difference influence individuals' experiences of 'foreignness' within a counselling professional role?'**

As explained, this question aimed to explore how the experience of 'not being from here' influenced the experience of being a (novice) practitioner and whether being a 'non-native' speaker or being culturally diverse played a particular role in this process. A contribution to this question derives from both groups' discussions on the interrelatedness between novice-practitioner anxiety and foreignness or non-nativeness, which, as explained in this chapter, is not necessarily bound by exacerbation, but may also reveal a justification of this anxiety. In addition, the two studies contributed to this question in different aspects, illuminating it with different perspectives. Study A portrayed that non-native speaking trainees discuss openly 'being foreign', and particularly in relation to being 'non-native' with regard to the development of their practitioner-self (emotional impact); their preoccupation appears to make them sensitive to the presence of difference in practice. Study B on the other hand, indicated that native speakers may find it harder to make links between 'being foreign' and their professional identity; as their difference is not tangible, they 'separate' the two aspects in order to maintain the focus of the session on the client's process. This leads to the suggestion of 'concrete' difference and 'non-nativeness' in particular, as impacting on the practitioner-self in a more overt

manner than 'intangible' difference inherent in foreignness, a particularly important finding for counselling practice. As suggested, this will be further discussed in the subsequent 'implications for training' section. Overall however, accounts from both studies demonstrated that 'non-nativeness' is a broader concept than the existing literature in the field of psychotherapy suggests.

7.6 Implications for Training

This thesis is located within the field of intercultural counselling and, more specifically, multicultural counselling training. Hence, one of its main contributions to the field lies in the provision of suggestions for the improvement of counsellor education in a multicultural environment, which in its turn advances the overall field of intercultural counselling. In the literature review section presented in chapter two, the need to better understand foreign trainees' perspectives (Grafanaki, 2010a), as well as to support this population (Ng & Smith, 2009), are explicit. Nonetheless, very few projects provide implications that would directly feed into the training community and advance this important phase in a practitioner's journey (e.g. Morris & Lee, 2004). This thesis addresses this dearth in the literature; in this section I offer specific suggestions that can be taken up by training programmes, supervisors and tutors that engage with foreign counselling trainees' education. The suggestions provided here derive from the data generated from the two groups of trainees that I interviewed, alongside my reflections on those and on existing theory. My findings point to three interrelated areas where multicultural counsellor education could be advanced: preparation of foreign trainees for intercultural/interlinguistic practice, provision of support in relation to the complexities that this task entails and development of trainees' cultural awareness.

7.6.1 Preparation for Intercultural Practice

One of the most recurrent themes in this thesis' findings was foreign trainees' anxiety in relation to their practice, and in particular their fear of potential client rejection as a result of their foreignness and non-nativeness. This anxiety seemed to settle through the accumulation of experience, gaining 'approval' by clients and

realising that their fears were not coming true. From this it can be suggested that part of this anxiety is associated with not-knowing and having (potentially) false expectations of practice. To that end, I propose that advancing trainees' preparation for intercultural/interlinguistic practice could remove some of this anxiety.

A means of achieving this would be to ensure that trainees formulate realistic expectations of practice through acquisition of knowledge around this phenomenon. This would be in line with the intersubjective negotiation of difference that findings unveiled. One source of realistic information could be clients' accounts of working with foreign therapists. For example, studies like Morris and Lee's (2004), that put forward clients' positive experiences of intercultural counselling could lessen trainees' fear of rejection. So, incorporation of such information in training curricula may be of help. Nonetheless, while clients' positive attitudes to other foreigners might be some consolation, they do not necessarily alleviate trainees' feelings of self-doubt and incompetence. As findings in my study suggest, actual experiences of practice play a central role in foreign trainees' self-efficacy. Before entering the stage of practising with real clients, however, foreign trainees can also benefit from practising with their peers. Given my study's focus on experiences with clients, this area was not particularly tackled. The literature suggests that opportunities for counselling practice with peers help students develop counselling skills, build confidence and understand the roles of counsellor and client (Hill, et al., 2007; Williams, et al., 1997; Woodside, Oberman, Cole, & Carruth, 2007). Hence, I suggest that an explicit acknowledgement of the intercultural/interlinguistic nature of foreign trainees' practice, alongside targeted constructive feedback regarding competence in practising counselling skills, can be helpful in the development of a more confident practitioner-self.

In addition to practising with peers and becoming familiarised with clients' positive experiences of intercultural practice, foreign trainees may also benefit from other foreign trainees' experiences of practice. Hearing about others' experiences may allow them to make more direct connections to the phenomenon and formulate more realistic expectations. This suggestion involves at least two potential applications: in a more indirect way, trainees may benefit from reading about other foreign trainees'

experiences of practice. Widespread dissemination of findings from studies like this one, is therefore needed. This is one of the foundations of my thesis and an essential reason for actively producing research outputs. Hence, I suggest that it is essential to, first of all, conduct more research on trainees' experiences of intercultural practice and secondly, ensure that these are incorporated into the counselling training curriculum. In addition, as beginning intercultural practice is a multifaceted phenomenon, it is important to present the full range of foreign trainees' experiences. Given existing literature's tendency to emphasise trainees' struggles (Killian, 2001; Ng & Smith, 2009; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003), it is suggested here that exploring and highlighting the various positive elements encompassed in this phenomenon (such as self-efficacy, benefits, clients' positive feedback) is vital to the construction of realistic expectations and the encouragement of foreign trainees.

The second application of advancing knowledge through others' experiences can derive from direct interactions with foreign trainees who have already started seeing clients. To that end, a 'buddying system' within the training setting that would create connections between foreign trainees at different phases could be particularly facilitative in terms of reducing anxiety and creating realistic expectations. Such a system, however, naturally has a flipside and its limitations ought to be acknowledged: first, it might fail to provide foreign trainees with a sense of belonging in a wider community, potentially exacerbating their disconnection from their domestic peers or their feelings of difference; secondly, this could take the form of providing reassurance rather than creating opportunities to engage with dialogue and explore individuals' fears and anxieties in a constructive manner, limiting its function. Moreover, practical complexities with regard to appropriate 'pairing' processes would also limit its operationalisation. As this study indicated, difference is negotiated intersubjectively and is not always 'tangible', possibly leading to the exclusion of people who may not fall into concrete categories. Taking everything into consideration, I propose that a foreign trainee buddying system can be advantageous if it takes place in addition to other opportunities for discussion and exploration of diversity, perhaps on an optional, self-regulating basis. I will explore this further in the next sub-section.

To conclude, formulating realistic expectations and reducing practice- and foreignness-related anxiety can be important steps towards supporting foreign trainees. While my suggestions to advance information on intercultural practice through literature, practice with peers and networking opportunities promote appropriate *preparation* for practice, these are all artificial situations that do not mirror accurately the complexity of working with real clients and the anxiety that this situation may entail for foreign novice practitioners. Unavoidably, as pointed out earlier, each trainee will need to go through their own 'baptism of fire' (Folkes-Skinner, et al., 2010) and construct their realistic understanding of this phenomenon through facing the challenges and rewards of direct practice interculturally. To that end, I offer some suggestions for supporting trainees during practice.

7.6.2 Support During Practice

Throughout this thesis I argued that beginning practice generates a great deal of stress at a personal level. In addition to impacting negatively on the training experience, stress may also interfere with fitness to practise (Barden, 2005). Hence, addressing this appropriately should be an essential aspect of counselling education. Arguably, trainees should have available sources of support outside the training context[26]. Regardless of the external support that foreign trainees may receive, it is also essential for training programmes to attend to trainees' well-being to safeguard quality practice for the community.

McKenzie-Mavinga (2011) argues that trainees who encounter difficulties can benefit greatly from opportunities for discussion; findings in this thesis support this perspective. Participants, and particularly non-native speakers, disclosed the struggles, complexities and anxieties of beginning practice. Alongside these accounts, they emphasised two helpful sources, i.e. internal processes (such as acceptance) and external support. The first is related to working on one's self and I

[26] For example, there is an ongoing debate around the necessity of a therapist's personal therapy as an obligatory aspect of training; positions vary depending on theoretical orientations and regulations of professional bodies (Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013; Murphy, 2005; Norcross, 2005; Orlinsky, Norcross, Rønnestad, & Wiseman, 2005).

will come back to it in the following section on advancement of cultural awareness. With regard to external support, foreign trainees valued supervision and discussions with peers, especially those 'in the same boat'. As explained in chapter two, supervision is a requirement for training and accreditation in Britain and, therefore, an essential component of counsellor education that has its own body of literature which falls beyond the scope of this thesis and will not be part of its implications for improving training.

With regard to the second identified source of support, namely discussions with others 'in the same boat', I need to express my hesitation to fully support this position and present it as a suggestion for counsellor education. I do not doubt that discussing with people who are going through similar difficulties may provide a sense of belonging, of not being 'the only one'. Nonetheless, following my previously developed argument on the formation of a 'buddying system', sharing one's struggles with people in a similar situation does not necessarily advance one's understanding of the situation, as it may prevent the emergence of a polyphony of voices: on one level, it limits the available support network, as foreigners compose only part of the trainee cohort. More importantly, however, it prevents foreign trainees from receiving responses to their concerns from domestic students. Given the intersubjectivity of negotiating difference, these responses could function as positive feedback and, as suggested by findings, impact positively on trainees' confidence. To that end, I suggest that foreign-peer groups can be beneficial as an addition to inclusive-peer discussion groups that will offer opportunities for dialogue and will allow further negotiation of difference to emerge. Hence, my suggestion for advancing support of foreign trainees during placement is the inclusion of dedicated time in the curriculum for the full cohort to discuss difference-related issues in the counselling setting. In the next sub-section I will offer a third argument to support this suggestion further.

7.6.3 Development of Cultural Awareness

The final theme that I tackle in my 'implications for training' is the need to advance (foreign) trainees' cultural-awareness, which is anticipated to promote practice. As

explained in chapter two, a substantial part of training in Britain aims at the development of self-awareness (Scaife, 2010), including cultural-awareness (Lago, 2011). This is pertinent to the whole population of counselling trainees, not just the foreign ones; therefore in this section I address it both in relation to foreign and domestic trainees.

As findings from study B indicate, native speakers offer rich accounts on 'feeling foreign' in their outside-practice life, but not in relation to their in-session experience. Therefore, while this population may not have the same support 'needs' as trainees who encounter specific struggles, it may need support in terms of advancing their cultural-awareness. The same may also be applicable to trainees who are aware of and preoccupied with a concrete trait of cultural difference (such as non-nativeness of visibility of ethnicity), but who may, because of this focus, overlook other aspects of diversity. This became evident through my own reflections on my role as an interviewer and my unawareness of my 'whiteness' in relation to an Asian participant due to my preoccupation with non-nativeness. Given the centrality of self- and cultural-awareness for adequate practice discussed earlier, disregard of one's own difference, undoubtedly requires the attention of multicultural counsellor education. To that end, it is imperative for training programmes to motivate wider explorations of diversity and ensure opportunities for foreign trainees to reflect upon their own difference, even if that does not match the widely discussed cases in the literature.

This brings us to the final argument in support of my suggestion for more targeted discussions and exploration of difference during training. Just like foreign trainees who may be unaware of aspects of their difference, any domestic student is equally likely to take for granted their 'sameness' with clients, especially if they share a language and a cultural background. This can be reinforced by the literature's tendency to emphasise 'concrete' intercultural situations. To that end, my earlier suggestion to include the whole cohort in the peer-discussion-groups on diversity finds another application: the advancement of domestic students' (and by extension of trainers') cultural-awareness, through participation in targeted discussions. Also, seeing what foreign peers may go through in relation to difference offers domestic

trainees insight into the experience of non-nativeness and foreignness, which in turn can enhance their understanding of their foreign clients' situations. This is in line with the field's suggestion that multiculturalism in the training environment advances westerners' intercultural competence and cultural awareness (Lau & Ng, 2012; Pattison & Robson, 2013; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). It becomes clear that by including the whole training community in discussions around issues of intercultural and interlinguistic practice, this space can become an important learning arena. For this to be beneficial for everyone, there needs to be an explicit understanding of cultural and linguistic difference as a broad phenomenon and not as something that is relevant to individuals whose speech or appearance is concretely different. To that end, counsellor education and the related literature ought to adopt an inclusive stance towards difference as omnipresent and beneficial, a stance that is likely to be reflected back into the community through practice and research, ultimately advancing the overall field of counselling in a globalised world.

In conclusion, I propose that counsellor education in multicultural settings ought to pay attention to three interrelated areas. First, to adequately prepare foreign trainees for the demanding process they are about to engage in; second, to offer opportunities for targeted discussions on issues around difference and diversity that would not be restricted to the 'big seven' socio-cultural traits suggested by the literature, but that would invite an understanding of difference as multifaceted and fluid. Finally, I have pointed out the necessity to ensure that explorations of cultural-awareness are promoted for the whole training cohort and not just focus on the tangible differences.

7.7 Limitations

In this section I present the key limitations I indentify in this investigation alongside a reflexive discussion of how I interpret and justify these in the context of this study. As in my section on ethical considerations in chapter four, I cannot claim that this is a comprehensive discussion. Rather, it is a presentation and explication of some key limitations that I have identified in, or that can be attributed to, my work. Following my epistemological and methodological foundations, as long as limitations are contemplated, acknowledged and explicitly discussed, they enhance the quality of a

project and illuminate opportunities for further work. To that end, I interweave this section of limitations with my reflexive process.

7.7.1 Sampling

A key limitation of my work can be found in its research design and sampling processes. There are three interrelated restrictions: first, the inclusion of a group of non-native speakers (study B) in a project that looks predominantly at the experience of second language use in practice[27]. As suggested, at times, this group struggled to relate to the interview questions and this is a potential limitation. While this may be partly related to participants' tendency to understand difference in terms of tangible cultural traits, which is created and reinforced by existing literature, to some extent, this may also have been reinforced by the research design of the project and my stance as an interviewer. The fact that the title of my study, and the information leaflet participants received, indicated the study's interest in language without clarifying that this is understood from a broader perspective that encompasses socio-cultural elements of language use, may have made participants in study B feel as a secondary sample group, potentially restricting their enthusiasm to share their experiences. Similarly, the complexity of phrasing questions about an 'intangible' experiences of difference without being too directive may have also restricted participants from discussing their distinctive experiences of intercultural practice in depth.

The second sampling-related identified limitation is related to the internal heterogeneity of the two groups of participants. In chapter four, I argued in favour of recruiting participants from different cultural backgrounds who shared the experience of 'being foreign' in Britain. In this section it is important to highlight that this decision resulted in disregarding culture-specific experiences. Put simply, by focusing on the experience of 'being foreign' or 'being non-native', I have not taken

[27] As explained throughout this thesis, the decision to include native speaking foreign trainees has undeniably illuminated the phenomenon of intercultural practice and added an element of originality to this work. Ultimately it has introduced one of this thesis' innovative contributions, that is, its suggestion to reconceptualise non-nativeness.

into account the impact of trainees' particular backgrounds on that experience. Given the existence of a body of literature within the field of counselling that highlights individuals' different experiences based on eastern-western cultural background (e.g. Christodoulidi & Lago, 2010; Wang & Kim, 2010; Yoon & Jepsen, 2008), the internal heterogeneity of group A (and potentially group B) could be seen as a limitation and my overlooking of these differences as an omission. In an attempt to identify the potential impact of this limitation and, if needed, to address it further, after the generation of recurrent themes for study A, I also checked Asian trainees' experiences for commonalities to each other and differences to European trainees. While no distinctive commonalities or differences were identified in this investigation, this does not necessarily mean that there are no culture-specific experiences in intercultural counselling practice. A larger number of participants and recruitment from a wider context would have allowed a better understanding of diversity in intercultural practice experience.

The third and final sampling-associated limitation that I wish to discuss relates to the small pool from which I recruited and the fact that my participants knew each other. In chapter four I have discussed the ethical implications of this decision; in my analysis in chapters five, six and seven I have hinted towards the potential impact of this decision on data generation. In this section I elaborate on this position. Findings in this study pointed to my participants' potential need for external validation from their peers, supervisors and clients. This could be extended to an assumption of participants seeking external validation through their participation in my research, that is, wanting to come across as competent in the eyes of a researcher and of potential readers of my research outputs. More particularly, it is possible that participants may have wanted to come across as competent in the eyes of a particular researcher who was conducting a small-scale research based on participants from one training institution. Trainees may have been conscious of the possibility of their contributions being read by other participants in the study who, in this case, are peers, as well as by the training institution that granted access to this cohort, i.e. their tutors and supervisors. This may have impacted on the type of experiences participants chose to share or the amount of information they wanted to disclose.

Hence, conducting research with a small and interconnected sample is likely to have limited my research in terms of generated data.

7.7.2 Generalisability

The small number of participants leads to another 'limitation' that can be identified in this thesis, namely its lack of generalisability. The term is deliberately in inverted commas, as I will argue that not being able to generalise in a way that a big-scale scale study would, does not necessarily restrict this work. Qualitative, and particularly idiographic, research's shortage of generalisability is a common criticism that reflects back to the 'paradigm war' (Goss & Mearns, 1997) discussed in chapter three. As a response to this criticism I would maintain that small-scale studies are not entirely excluded from generalising 'rights'. As Smith et al. put it, 'idiography does not eschew generalizations but rather prescribes a different way of establishing those' through locating them 'in the particular' (2009, p. 29). Flyvbjerg's (2001) work offers a convincing case for the 'power of the example'; following his argument, while my findings are highly context-dependent and thus, cannot be generalised to wider populations, my study could bring to the spotlight 'black swan' cases that would 'disprove' existing theories, or paradigmatic cases that would allow me to claim that since one trainee expressed a specific experience, this *could* also apply to any other trainee.

Finally, as a more theoretical response to this position however, I would argue that following my arguments in chapters three and four, as generalisability was not an objective of this study, its absence (or partial presence) is not a *limitation* of this project but a characteristic inherent in this type of research.

7.7.3 Unexplored Topics

Moving on from sampling to content-related restrictions, another limitation of this study may derive from its narrow focus, which may have led to the disregarding of experiences that were not directly linked to it. As identified in the literature review section, there was a salient need for research on a) language as an aspect of cultural difference in counselling practice and b) clinical practice in particular rather than

overall training experiences. So, the primary focus of this study was on second-language use (perceived from a broad perspective that included individuals from other English-speaking countries). At the same time, the deliberate suffix 'second language ***and*** *culture'* intended to offer the opportunity to participants to discuss their understanding of other aspects of cultural difference as experienced when practising in Britain. The vagueness of the concept of 'culture' however may not have facilitated participants' explorations in that direction. In addition, my own preoccupation with second-language use may have limited my ability to allow other themes to emerge. Through my realisation of my unawareness of my 'whiteness' (discussed in chapter four), I came to wonder whether I have ignored other aspects of difference that participants may have mentioned in a less overt manner. In spite of my cautiousness not to silence participants both during data generation and analysis, I am aware that my own preoccupation with language and the focus of this study might have favoured language-related discussions over other themes.

Having discussed potentially silencing some experiences and highlighting others, I also ought to mention an interrelated limitation that I have identified in this project, i.e. the restricted discussion of power dynamics. As explained in chapter four I acknowledge the presence of power asymmetries in any relationship and I do not necessarily understand this through a negative lens, as long as these are explicitly acknowledged and reflected upon. Nonetheless, discussions on power asymmetries in this thesis have been limited to issues on ethics and data generation processes, potentially overlooking the impact of such processes in the therapeutic encounters of my participants. While this was coherent with my participants' accounts that did not explicitly revolve around power inequalities in practice, the fact that the thesis did not emphasise this domain may not facilitated these issues to emerge.

7.7.4 Non-nativeness-related Anxiety

This section concludes with a fundamental 'limitation' of this work, namely the researcher's second language use. Similar to my argument on generalisability, my own non-nativeness is an inextricable component of this thesis and not necessarily a limitation. In this section, however, I illuminate a certain aspect that may have

limited this study. In chapter one I explained how being a non-native speaker is central to my identity and therefore dominates my intercultural experience. In chapter four I discussed the struggles I faced in relation to data analysis and to representing concisely my participants' accounts. In this final chapter I discuss an additional related restriction, namely the impact of my non-native-related anxiety on my fitness to conduct interviews.

Interviewing is a demanding task that requires multitasking; the interviewer needs to be able to focus on her participants' story, prepare follow-up questions, note interesting points for further exploration, alongside making sure that the discussion remains focused, and being aware of her own interventions and disclosures (Roulston, 2010). Given the complexity of such an endeavour, novice researchers can find interviewing particularly challenging and stressful (Roulston, et al., 2003). In my case, my non-nativeness and my perception of it as a deficit, have been interwoven with this novice-interviewer anxiety. For example, at times of needing to ask for clarifications I doubted my competence and worried about my performance. Apart from the personal impact that this may have had on myself (and which is not a limitation of this study), this anxiety distracted me and impeded my role as an interviewer. By turning my attention to my performance instead of focusing on my participants' story, I may have limited the amount or quality of the generated data. Therefore, while non-nativeness has not limited my work in a conventional way, such as, preventing understanding or communication, it has interfered with my interviewing capacity.

Given that I have argued in favour of interweaving the discussion of limitations with the researcher's reflexivity, as a final note I highlight an element of this research that is related to the above-mentioned limitation, but elucidates a different perspective on it. Readers might have noticed a parallel between my experience as a non-native speaking interviewer and my participants' accounts of intercultural practice. During data analysis I became increasingly aware of the fact that, like my participants, I was apprehensive about my performance and faced several difficulties in intercultural research that made me feel uncomfortable and awkward. Nonetheless, overall I perceived myself as competent and valued the outcome of my work. On realising

this, I initially contemplated the possibility of having interpreted my participants' experiences of practice based on my experience of conducting research. Upon reflection however, I came to believe that this process has probably been reversed. It was my participants' accounts of self-efficacy and their animated descriptions of practice-related satisfaction that made me see that indeed, I am also able to conduct research in a second language, in spite of the challenges I encounter. This realisation has been invaluable. Most importantly, however, the analogy between my research experience and my participants' counselling experience suggests the potential existence of common ground in intercultural experience in diverse language-intensive, performative professions. This last point could be the basis of future interdisciplinary investigation of experiences of performing in a second language. This introduces the following section of this chapter, which offers some suggestions for future research in the field.

7.8 Suggestions for Future Research

The above-mentioned suggestion will not be elaborated here. Given the dearth of research on foreign trainees, I restrain the focus of this discussion on this area to contribute more to the primary area of this investigation rather than proposing alternative areas of focus. Thus, this section offers suggestions for enhancement of projects that set out to investigate beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice. Throughout this thesis I have argued in general in favour of more research on multicultural counselling training from the trainees' perspective and underlined the need to base this on an inclusive perception of cultural difference and non-nativeness. In the preceding section I discussed some key limitations of this study. These limitations inform my broad call for more research and shape it into specific suggestions to that end.

To begin, future work in beginning intercultural/interlinguistic practice can greatly benefit from ensuring a larger recruitment pool (not necessarily sample) to overcome the confidentiality-related complexities and the compromises of this study: a larger cohort will allow the examination of culture and language-specific elements that have been overlooked in this study to safeguard participants' anonymity. Being able

to reveal and comment upon participants' specific countries of origin and native languages is likely to illuminate the wider context of their experience and allow deeper interpretations. Similarly, recruitment of participants from different UK regions and training programmes will allow investigation of the intercultural practice experience in the light of specific attitudes towards practice and difference, theoretical orientations and training traditions. This will facilitate the mapping of diversity in this area and gradually permit scholars, trainers and researchers to develop a wider understanding of this phenomenon across Britain. That said, the replication of similar work in countries other than Britain and the US is also essential for the construction of an even broader, robust body of literature on the subject of intercultural counselling practice.

Moreover, designing research on the experience of intercultural/interlinguistic practice, but adopting a different perspective to it, is also anticipated to advance understanding of this phenomenon. For example, it will be interesting to explore trainees' experiences of practice at different developmental phases, as this thesis originally aimed to do. While the 'snapshot' design was more appropriate for the exploratory nature of this thesis, future work could benefit from a longitudinal design that would examine the role of the passage of time in *developing* a 'foreign' practitioner-self, an aspect that this study has not addressed. Accordingly, this study was designed based on groups of native-speaking and non-native speaking trainees, suggesting that language and second-language use ought to be examined from a wider perspective. Apart from the native/non-native 'binary', however, more research can be conducted on different language use in relation to traits other than linguistic mastery or proficiency. For example, it will be interesting to see the role of language use among therapists and clients of different genders, age groups, social class and educational backgrounds etc. Finally research focused on trainees' specific training needs in relation to intercultural practice can also advance this field by providing more specific implications for advancing trainee support.

By extension, more detailed research on other aspects of multicultural counselling training in relation to counselling practice can also enhance this area. For example, further research on clients' experiences of intercultural practice or supervisory

relationships can all build a comprehensive body of literature on the wider field of beginning practice in a second language and culture. As suggested, however, given the under-researched nature of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic culture, I refrain from entering such discussions.

7.9 Overall Contribution and Closing Note

The project's contribution to knowledge has been indicated throughout this thesis. In this closing section I offer a summarising account of this project's contribution to knowledge.

This thesis tackled an under-researched area of the wider field of intercultural counselling (experience of beginning intercultural/interlinguistic) from a rarely explored perspective (foreign trainees) and provided specific implications to support this population in counsellor education. Its particular focus (linguistic and cultural difference), research design (native/non-native speakers) and methodology (idiography, hermeneutic phenomenology) stressed the centrality of language use in counselling practice and the pertinence of conducting more research in that direction. Its findings offered in-depth understandings on what it might be like for a foreign trainee to begin practice in a second language and culture in Britain, illuminating a phenomenon that has been addressed by very few scholars in the field. To that end, the accounts presented in this thesis provide a platform for foreign trainees to construct realistic expectations of practice and recognise aspects of their own fears and experiences of beginning practice; for domestic trainees to gain insight into the demanding experience of being culturally diverse and/or non-native speaker, make links to their foreign peers' and clients' experiences and advance their own cultural-awareness; finally, for trainers and supervisors to identify trainees' struggles, needs, but also strengths, in relation to practising abroad. Hence, ultimately, the significance of this project lies in its connectedness to the actual field, an invaluable contribution for a project located within a 'people profession' (Carr, et al., 2011).

In addition to these contributions, however, this thesis has also advanced my own knowledge and development. Having interacted with Amy, Elena, Claire, Crystal,

Emma, Mary, Susan and Lisa, and having lived with their stories for several months, have undoubtedly improved my sensitivity to intercultural communication, facilitated my personal cultural awareness and taught me to attend to and respect difference. I hope that through my own reflections on these processes, any reader will be able to make connections to the complexity but also fascination of conducting research interculturally, and ultimately, of living in a multicultural society.

7.10 Summary of Thesis

In chapters one and two I identified a gap in the literature and highlighted the necessity to investigate an important phenomenon in the field of counselling and psychotherapy in a globalised world. In chapters three and four, I demonstrated how designing and conducting an idiographic research project in this area would advance the existing body of research and promote knowledge further. In chapters five and six, I discussed explicitly and in detail the contributions of study A and study B to the relevant bodies of literature and illuminated how my findings relate, juxtapose or elucidate the findings of other related studies. Finally, in chapter seven, I provided evidence for this thesis' contribution to the wider field of multicultural counselling training and intercultural counselling by offering general conclusions that elucidate the phenomenon of beginning to practise in a second language and culture, but also that engage in a more theoretical dialogue on the needs of the wider profession of counselling and psychotherapy.

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Appendices

A. Preliminary Research Design

A.1. Information Leaflet for Preliminary Design

Research Title: ***Foreign Counselling Trainees: Working with clients in a second language and culture.***

My name is Lorena Georgiadou and I am a first year PhD student in Counselling and Psychotherapy at the University of Edinburgh. In my PhD I wish to investigate the experiences of non-native counselling trainees related to their practice with clients. I understand that you are in the process of professional training in counselling and are soon starting your counselling practice. As part of my research I am interested in exploring ***your expectations, thoughts and feelings about your upcoming practice with clients***.

To this end, I intend to run a focus group, a type of group discussion in which participants talk in a general way about a theme. I plan to facilitate a discussion about your forthcoming engagement with clients. The focus group will be audio recorded, transcribed and the data analysed. Material from this will be used for my PhD thesis and possibly in publications in academic journals.

I would like to invite you to join the focus group, which will be held in a room at the [removed for confidentiality reasons] (see information below), for one occasion only and it will last approximately 1.5 hours. I might contact you again in a few months in

a follow up interview about your experience of working with clients. This, however, will be completely independent from your participation in the focus group.

I have invited a small number of foreign counselling trainees to join the focus group. Others attending will be myself (facilitator) and a PhD student who will track the discussion. This will help to keep track of which member makes each contribution.

For reasons of confidentiality all data from the focus group will be anonymised. Your real name will be removed from the recordings and you will be allocated a pseudonym. I will be the only person to access the raw data (audio recordings), which will be stored in a safe place until the transcription is complete. Then they will be destroyed. You have the right to withdraw your participation and/or any data that you provide at any point in the process.

Please feel free to contact me about any questions you might have about my research or the focus group at:

L.Georgiadou@sms.ed.ac.uk or at [phone number]

Should you have something that you wish to discuss further with my supervisors, you can email either:

Siobhan Canavan at: siobhan.canavan@ed.ac.uk or

Marion Smith at: marion.smith@ed.ac.uk

If you are interested in participating, please let me know your availability by clicking on the link below.

If more than one dates/times are convenient to you, please tick them all. If none of the dates are convenient, but you still want to participate, email me with an alternative date/time and I will take this into consideration in planning the date.

http://doodle.com/2r7vbt9cr36vcwmz

Once we have a suitable date and time I will email you these details.

Thank you in advance for your help,

Best regards,

Lorena Georgiadou

A.2. Consent Forms

Pre-Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Research title: ***Foreign Counselling Trainees: Working with clients in a second language and culture.***

Focus Group Theme: **Foreign counselling trainees' expectations, thoughts and feelings relating to starting practice with clients.**

I have read and understood the description of the aforementioned project.

On this basis, I agree to participate in the focus group and I give permission to the researcher to audio record the discussion.

I understand that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Signature ……

Date: ……

Post-Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Research title: ***Foreign Counselling Trainees: Working with clients in a second language and culture.***

Focus Group Theme: **Foreign counselling trainees' expectations, thoughts and feelings relating to starting practice with clients.**

I have read and understood the description of the aforementioned project.

I understand that any information provided will be anonymised and used in a PhD thesis and other possible publications. I also give permission to the researcher to use direct quotations from my contributions.

I understand that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

If you wish to withdraw any specific information that you have shared at the group, please note this bellow

……
……
……
…….

Signature …….. Date ……..

Additional Information:

I would like to be recorded as "……."

(Please choose any name you like)

I would like to be contacted in the future for a follow up interview YES NO

A.3. Aide-Memoire for Focus Group

TOPIC GUIDE for Focus Group (Aide-Memoire)

PRE-INTERVIEW: Brief discussion about the challenges of anonymity, rights of withdrawal and a reminder about sharing as much as participants feel comfortable with. Discussion on respecting others' contributions both during the focus group and after its end. Signing of Consent Form.

OPENING THE DISCUSSION – BREAKING THE ICE: Introducing the topic of beginning intercultural practice. Invite general introductions and ask for information regarding their training (what programmes are they on) and future placement (e.g. when do they plan to start).

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: 3 Main Areas:

Language (awareness of difference, use, challenges – in general and in training)

Cultural Background (awareness of one's cultural background, presence of foreignness in training)

Forthcoming Practice (thoughts/responses/feelings in general and in relation to their foreignness/non-nativeness)

OTHER ISSUES: Any related concerns/thoughts that have not been discussed?
CLOSING THE DISCUSSION: summarise major points and invite them to make additions/changes.
POST-INTERVIEW: Signing the post-interview consent form

B. Final Research Design

B.1. Information Leaflets

Information for Group A

Research Title: ***Foreign trainees' experiences of counselling in a second language and culture***

My name is Lorena Georgiadou and I am a PhD student in Counselling and Psychotherapy at the University of Edinburgh. In my PhD I wish to investigate the experiences of foreign counsellors in training related to their counselling practice in a second language and culture. I understand that you are in the process of professional training in counselling and that you have started your placement. I am interested in exploring ***your distinctive experiences of counselling in a second language and a foreign culture.***

To this end, I would like to invite you to participate in a single one-to-one semi-structured interview. This means that you will be invited to talk to me about your experience of counselling in a second language and culture. I do not have specific questions for you to answer but general themes to explore.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and the data analysed. Material from this will be used for my PhD thesis and in subsequent conference papers and publications in academic journals. The interview will be held at a convenient time for you, in a private room at [removed for confidentiality reasons] and it will last up to 90 minutes. I may need to contact you again a few

weeks after the interview to clarify my understanding of specific parts of your contributions. You have the right to refuse this meeting.

To ensure confidentiality your real name will be removed from the transcription and you will be allocated a pseudonym. Your training establishment, training programme and placement site will not be mentioned at any point. With your permission, I would like to include culturally related information (such as place of origin/ethnicity) to accompany your pseudonym. This is to enhance understanding of your experience but may decrease the level of anonymity at a local level. We will have the chance to discuss this risk in person, prior to the interview.

I will be the only person to access the raw data (audio recordings), which will be stored in a safe place until September 2016. Then they will be destroyed. You will be asked to give consent prior to the interview for the audio recording and after its completion for the contributions to be used. You will have the opportunity to receive a copy of the transcript of your interview and a summary of findings (unless you state otherwise).

This interview will give you the opportunity to share your unique experience of counselling in a second language and culture and will enhance understanding on what it means to be a non-native trainee counselling in this context. Your participation is voluntary and entirely independent from your training programme. Please feel free to contact me about any questions you might have about my research, the interview process or the potential risks at: L.Georgiadou@sms.ed.ac.uk or at [phone number]

Should you have something that you wish to discuss further with my research supervisors, you can email either: Siobhan Canavan at: siobhan.canavan@ed.ac.uk or Marion Smith at: marion.smith@ed.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about your participation in this research project at any stage, please do not hesitate to discuss these with me. If, however, you wish to raise a formal complaint or have a concern formally noted, you may contact Seamus Prior at seamus.prior@ed.ac.uk.

If you are interested in participating, please let me know your availability and we will arrange a meeting.

Thank you in advance, your help is much appreciated.

Best regards,

Lorena Georgiadou

Information for Group B

Research Title: ***Foreign trainees' experiences of counselling in a second language and culture***

My name is Lorena Georgiadou and I am a PhD student in Counselling and Psychotherapy at the University of Edinburgh. In my PhD I wish to investigate the experiences of foreign counsellors in training related to their counselling practice in a second language and culture. My project also focuses on the experiences of native English-speaking trainees, who counsel in a foreign cultural environment. I understand that you are a foreign native English-speaker in the process of professional training in counselling and that you have started your placement. I am interested in exploring ***your distinctive experiences of counselling in a foreign culture.***

To this end, I would like to invite you to participate in a single one-to-one semi-structured interview. This means that you will be invited to talk to me about your

experience of counselling in a foreign culture and also to consider any specific communication issues this may have presented for your practice. I do not have specific questions for you to answer but general themes to explore.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and the data analysed. Material from this will be used for my PhD thesis and in subsequent conference papers and publications in academic journals. The interview will be held at a convenient time for you, in a private room at [removed for confidentiality reasons] and it will last up to 90 minutes. I may need to contact you again a few weeks after the interview to clarify my understanding of specific parts of your contributions. You have the right to refuse this meeting.

To ensure confidentiality your real name will be removed from the transcription and you will be allocated a pseudonym. Your training establishment, training programme and placement site will not be mentioned at any point. With your permission, I would like to include culturally related information (such as place of origin/ethnicity) to accompany your pseudonym. This is to enhance understanding of your experience but may decrease the level of anonymity at a local level. We will have the chance to discuss this risk in person, prior to the interview.

I will be the only person to access the raw data (audio recordings), which will be stored in a safe place until September 2016. Then they will be destroyed. You will be asked to give consent prior to the interview for the audio recording and after its completion for the contributions to be used. You will have the opportunity also to receive a copy of the transcript of your interview and a summary of findings (unless you state otherwise).

This interview will give you the opportunity to share your unique experience of counselling in a foreign culture and will enhance understanding on what it means to be a trainee counselling in this context. Your participation is voluntary and entirely independent from your training programme. Please feel free to contact me about any questions you might have about my research the interview process or the potential risks at: L.Georgiadou@sms.ed.ac.uk or at [phone number].

Should you have something that you wish to discuss further with my research supervisors, you can email either: Siobhan Canavan at: siobhan.canavan@ed.ac.uk or Marion Smith at: marion.smith@ed.ac.uk .

If you have any concerns about your participation in this research project at any stage, please do not hesitate to discuss these with me. If, however, you wish to raise a formal complaint or have a concern formally noted, you may contact Seamus Prior at seamus.prior@ed.ac.uk.

If you are interested in participating, please let me know your availability and we will arrange a meeting.

Thank you in advance, your help is much appreciated.

Best regards,

Lorena Georgiadou

B.2. Consent Forms

Pre-Interview Consent Form

1. CONSENT FORM

Research Title: **Foreign trainees' experiences of counselling in a second language and culture**

I have read the relevant information leaflet and I consent to participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher for the above-mentioned project. I understand that

the interview will be audio-recorded and the data will be used in the researcher's PhD thesis and in subsequent publications and conferences.

I also understand that I should disclose as much information I feel comfortable with and that I have the right to withdraw part of my (or my entire) participation at any point in the process of data generation, and that by doing so there will be no consequences on my practice, my training or me.

Finally, I understand that my name and all potentially identifying information about me will be anonymised and my training establishment, training programme and placement centre will be protected.

Please sign this document if you agree to ALL the above:

Name……. Signature……...Date.....

I would like my name to be recorded in the research and related documents as:…….....(please choose a name)

I consent for culturally related information to accompany my pseudonym: **YES NO**

If **YES**, then I would like my cultural identity to be recorded as.....(choose whatever you feel describes you in terms of e.g. place of origin/ethnicity etc).

If **NO,** then all culturally related information that you might have mentioned will be removed from the transcripts.

Post-Interview Consent Form

2. POST-INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Research Title: **Foreign trainees' experiences of counselling in a second language and culture**

Please tick the boxes **<u>if you agree</u>** with the statements:

I give permission to the researcher (Lorena Georgiadou) to use my contributions as data for her doctoral project and in future publications and conferences ☐

I give permission to the researcher to use direct quotations from my contributions ☐

I would like to receive the transcript of my interview for my personal record ☐

I would like to receive the transcript, read it **AND** be given the opportunity to consent again ☐

I would like to receive a summary of findings of this project ☐

I consent to be contacted again for potential clarifications after the interview ☐

If there is anything that you have shared with me during this interview that you wish to withdraw at this point, please note it below:

……

……

…….

Name:…….....

Signature:…….

Date.....

Optional Post-Interview Consent Form

3. FINAL OPTIONAL CONSENT FORM

(To be given only upon request at Post-Interview Consent Form)

Research Title: **Foreign trainees' experiences of counselling in a second language and culture**

Please tick the boxes **if you agree** with the statements:

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the transcription of my interview ☐

I have read the transcript and I give permission to the researcher (Lorena Georgiadou) to use the whole interview **without any exceptions** ☐

OR

I have read the transcript, have marked **parts of my contributions that I wish to withdraw** on the original copy and sent it back to the researcher who has agreed not to use the parts that I have excluded ☐

OR

I have read the transcript and I have decided to completely withdraw my participation from this research ☐

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

B.3. Thank you Note

Dear.....,

I would like to thank you once again for your participation in my research. I am well aware that your free time is limited and I appreciate you spending part of it today in our interview.

This interview was carefully designed with the intention to make you feel comfortable and I hope that this has been an interesting experience for you. However, talking about personal experience may evoke emotional reactions or unexpected feelings and thoughts. If this is the case for you, I hope that your professional supports will be available for you to discuss further any issues.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you feel the need to discuss anything further with me or to request additional clarifications on my research.

I wish you all the best with your training,

Kindest regards,

Lorena Georgiadou

Mob: (removed)

Email: l.georgiadou@sms.ed.ac.uk

B.4. Interview Schedules / Aide-Memoires

Study A

TOPIC GUIDE for Interviews with Group A (Aide-Memoire)

PRE-INTERVIEW: Brief discussion about the challenges of anonymity, rights of withdrawal and a reminder about sharing as much as participants feel comfortable with. Signing of Consent Form.

OPENING THE DISCUSSION – BREAKING THE ICE: Introducing the interview theme. Ask for general information regarding their training and placement (e.g. when they started) and client experience (e.g. how many/for how long).

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: 2 Main Areas:

a. LANGUAGE

Sample questions: How is linguistic difference present in your practice? Can you think of specific examples where language difference/your non-nativeness was present in practice? How did you feel in relation to those? Are these experiences important to you?

b. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Sample questions: How do you experience/understand your cultural background as present in your practice? Can you identify any cultural differences in your practice? Can you think of specific examples or occasions where cultural difference was central? Were these experiences important to you?

SUBSEQUENT THEMES:

TRAINEE'S NEGOTIATION OF DIFFERENCE: How do you respond to the issues you have identified? How do you handle those? Do you discuss/express these experiences with/to someone?

OTHER ISSUES REGARDING PRACTICE: invite them to think about other issues that I might have not thought about.

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION: summarise major points of what was said and invite them to make additions or alter something.

POST-INTERVIEW: Asking them to sign the post-interview consent form.

Study B

Topic Guide for Interviews with Group B (Aide-Memoire)

PRE-INTERVIEW: Brief discussion about the challenges of anonymity, rights of withdrawal and a reminder about sharing as much as participants feel comfortable with. Ask them to sign the Consent Form.

OPENING THE DISCUSSION – BREAKING THE ICE: Introducing the interview theme. Ask for general information regarding their training, clinical placements (e.g. when they started) and experience of clients (e.g. how many/for how long).

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: 2 Main Areas:

a. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Sample questions: How do you experience/understand your cultural background as present in your practice? Can you identify any cultural differences in your practice? Can you think of specific examples or occasions where cultural difference was central? Were these experiences important to you?

b. LANGUAGE:

Sample questions: Can you identify any linguistic diversity present in your practice? Can you think of specific examples where language difference/the fact that you were not British was present in terms of language in your practice? How did you feel in relation to those? Were these experiences important to you?

SUBSEQUENT THEMES:

TRAINEE'S NEGOTIATION OF DIFFERENCE: How do you respond to the issues you have identified? How do you handle those? Do you discuss/express these experiences to/with someone?

OTHER ISSUES REGARDING PRACTICE: invite them to think about other issues that I might have not thought about.

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION: summarise major points of what was said and invite them to make additions or alter something.

POST-INTERVIEW: Asking them to sign the post-interview consent form.